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REFORM AND CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM IN ISRAEL TODAY AND TOMORROW

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK **Z'vi Kurzweil**

THE CASE FOR COUNT CLERMONT-TONNERRE **Jakob J. Petuchowski**

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The First Reader R.G. 387

REFORM AND CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM IN ISRAEL: TODAY AND TOMORROW

— A Symposium

*Reform and Conservative Judaism In Israel: Aims
and Platforms*

EPHRAIM TABORY 390

Respondents:

ROBERT GORDIS, SEYMOUR COHEN, NISSIM ELIAD,
HERTZEL FISHMAN, THEODORE FRIEDMAN, DAVID M. GOR-
DIS, ALFRED GOTTSCHAALK, RICHARD G. HIRSCH, MOSHE
KOL, MICHAEL LANGER, HERMAN E. SCHAALMAN, MOR-
DECAI WAXMAN, MOSES CYRUS WEILER, MARSHALL
WOLKE, IRA S. YODOVIN, MOSHE ZEMER

401-458

Rabbi (poem)

GARY PACERNIK 458

Universalism in the Philosophy of Rabbi Joseph B.

Soloveitchik

Z'VI KURZWEIL 459

The Case for Count Clermont-Tonnerre

JAKOB J. PETUCHOWSKI 472

Creative Assimilation and its Benefits

REBECCA SCHERER 478

A Whole New Megillah

Review-Essay on *Megillat Hanukkah*

by Arthur A. Chiel

ERIC L. FRIEDLAND 485

The Jewish Muse

Review-Essay on *Hebrew Ballads*

and Other Poems

by Else Lasker-Schüler

The Syrian-African Rift and Other Poems

by Avoth Yeshurun

and

In Light of Genesis

by Pamela White Hadas

BERNHARD FRANK 491

REVIEWS

Jewish Justice and Reconciliation: History of the Jewish

Conciliation Board of America, 1930-1968

by Israel Goldstein

LEO PFEFFER 499

Immigrant Survivors: Post-Holocaust Consciousness in

Recent Jewish American Fiction

by Dorothy Seidman Bilik

MIRIAM ROSHWALD 501

COMMUNICATIONS

from Eugene J. Fisher, Robert Gordis

506

INDEX to Volume 31

508

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RUTH B. WAXMAN

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." *From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

The First Reader

Reform and Conservatism in Israel

Ever since the creation of the State of Israel, the religious situation there has been a source of concern to all those dedicated to the variety of religious experience characteristic of modern Judaism. Several distinct factors have operated to limit and constrain free religious development in the Land. The non-religious and often anti-religious outlook of many early Zionist pioneers, the presence of long-standing Orthodox groups in Jerusalem and Safed, and the lack of contact between most Israelis and modern forms of Judaism were important. Above all, the political structure of the State made it possible for small political parties to utilize their handful of votes in the Knesset to impose their will on the majority. This situation helped to produce an entrenched Orthodox Establishment which is willing and able to subvert genuine religious freedom and equality by imposing legal disabilities and social handicaps upon modernist religious movements.

These external problems do not exhaust the difficulties confronting Reform and Conservatism in the State of Israel. *Ephraim Tabor*, of Bar-Ilan University, has studied the history and the prospects of both movements and presents his conclusions in a paper "Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel: Aims and Platforms." It serves as a basis for a wide-ranging symposium on Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel by the contributors who are a cross-section of the leadership of both movements in the United States and in Israel.

The Philosophy of the Rav

The most influential orthodox religious philosopher in our times is Rabbi Joseph Ben Soloveitchik. His unique approach to Jewish tradition is explored in a paper by *Z'vi Kurzweil* entitled "Universalism in the Philosophy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik." It will prove an excellent introduction to the writings of the Rav.

The French Had A Good Word For It

Particularly in the years after the Holocaust, there are voices that denigrate modern Jewish Emancipation that began with the French Revolution, and argue that the emergence of Jews from the ghettos in western Europe was a disaster. I must confess that this contention would be more impressive if those who attack the Emancipation in the name of "the good old days" were to turn in their citizenship papers in the countries of the democratic West, surrender their social, economic and cultural opportunities as equal citizens of the countries in which they reside, and march back into the Ghetto.

Be this as it may, the argument is even more frequently advanced that modern Jews bartered the birthright of their authentic national character for the mess of pottage of liberty and equality.

The great spokesman for Jewish rights in the *États-Général*s in France was Count Stanislas Clermont-Tonnerre. He is the subject of a trenchant paper by *Jakob J. Petuchowski*, "The Case for Count Clermont-Tonnerre." In it he calls for a more fair-minded analysis of the Emancipation and a recognition of the blessings that it has conferred upon Jews everywhere in the world, no matter what their orientation.

It should be added that the perils of assimilation, with which contemporary Jews are quite properly concerned, are the consequence not of the legal Emancipation of the Jews, but of powerful, sociological and cultural factors. From them, no group in Jewish life is exempt, not even those who are loudest in condemning the Emancipation, while continuing to enjoy its fruits.

To Take the Best From the Outside World

No word in the current Jewish vocabulary is held in lower esteem than "assimilation." It is a favorite epithet used by warring individuals and groups in attacking one another. It is used as a synonym for disloyalty, and even treachery, for materialistic self-seeking and craven surrender to the enemy.

Where there is so much heat, there is often too little light. The phenomenon of assimilation has at least two principal aspects, positive and negative. The latter, to be sure, is a threat to Jewish survival. The former, on the other hand, has been a creative factor in Judaism from its inception to the present.

Rebecca Scherer, in her essay, "Creative Assimilation and its Benefits," offers a survey of the beneficial role that such assimilation has played in the growth, the content and the survival of Judaism through the ages. While scholars might question one or another of the instances she adduces, the thrust of the evidence is overwhelming and is unequivocal. Judaism has been enriched through time by its capacity to assimilate valuable and significant elements from the life and culture of the world.

A Worthy New Megillah

There are only two major Jewish festivals not ordained in the Torah — Purim and Hanukkah. While Purim finds its unique place in the Bible through the Book of Esther, Hanukkah has no biblical source. The Books of the Maccabees, written to describe the heroic exploits that led to the establishment of Hanukkah and, ultimately, the independence of the Second Jewish Commonwealth, were never admitted into the biblical canon of Judaism. They remained in the Apocrypha to which Catholics and Protestants have accorded varying degree of sanctity.

Recently, a Hebrew version of the Maccabean story, entitled *Megillat Hanukkah*, was issued under the auspices of The Rabbinical Assembly to parallel its earlier publication of *Megillat Esther*. In his review-essay, "A Whole New Megillah," *Eric L. Friedland* discusses this recent work and emphasizes his view that there is need for new and creative religious expression in Conservative Judaism.

Contemporary Jewish Poetry

The heightened degree of Jewish consciousness characteristic of this generation may be reflected in the increased poetic output in our day. *Bernhard Frank*, in his review-essay, "The Jewish Muse," discusses three new publications, issued in a new series. Two of the poets are presented in translation, while the third writes in English. These manifestations of ongoing literary creativity are to be greeted with genuine joy.

R.G.

REFORM AND CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM IN ISRAEL TODAY AND TOMORROW

Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel: Aims and Platforms

EPHRAIM TABORY

REFORM AND CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM HAVE had an institutional presence in Israel for over ten years. As the denominations with which millions of Jews outside of Israel are affiliated, their establishment in Israel marks a milestone in their development as religious denominations. This is especially so because the religious establishment in Israel is clearly not receptive to what it perceives as “deviant” and religiously “inauthentic” movements. Actually, only a few thousand families have affiliated with the approximately forty Conservative and ten Reform congregations in the country, and many of the families are of Anglo-Saxon background.¹ Nevertheless, the foothold that these movements have established in Israel carries with it a religious alternative for native Israelis in the future, if not the present; the possibilities of the movements’ developments in the future warrant an understanding of their developments at the present time.

The Reform Movement

The Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, herein referred to as the Reform movement, according to its platform,

aspires to strengthen the commitment and loyalty of our people to their Jewish heritage, and to shape life in the State of Israel in light of the moral principles for individual and collective behavior prescribed by Judaism. The movement strives to cultivate among Jews in Israel and elsewhere a Jewish way of life that is imbued with love for their people and with a creativeness that draws from the wellspring of Judaism.²

1. Ephraim Tabory, “A Sociological Study of the Reform and Conservative Movements in Israel” (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, 1980).

2. *Platform of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism*. Adopted 1977.

EPHRAIM TABORY is a lecturer in sociology and anthropology at Bar-Ilan University.

The way in which these aims will be fulfilled, the platform continues, is by stressing that Judaism should not be confined to matters of ritual and personal status, and that the obligations of the *mizvot* should impinge on the relationship of man to his fellow man, as well as of man to God. The method of determining which *mizvot* to follow is based on the following principles:

1. the purpose of a *mizvah* and its historical development;
2. the possibility of sanctifying life with its observance;
3. the feasibility of fulfilling it in contemporary conditions;
4. the impact of the *mizvah* on *Klal Yisrael*; and
5. there being no conflict between the *mizvah* and the dictates of conscience.

The emphasis on the commandments between man and his fellow man is in keeping with the prophetic view of Judaism, an emphasis broached by Reform Judaism in the past. The platform further indicates those social problems in Israel which require the application of these precepts as commandments. They are: the social gap; the integration of the various ethnic groups; the absorption of immigrants; and the existence of a large, non-Jewish minority in the state.

In the context of the present study, two questions are asked with regard to the Reform platform. First, why did the Reform movement feel the need to issue a formal platform? The fact that the Conservative movement has not issued a movement platform serves as a backdrop, or framework, in which this question is asked. Second, how is the specific content of the platform affected by the situation of the Reform movement in Israel?

The answer to the first question relates to the place of Reform Judaism in Israel. The argument raised here is that it is the relative failure of Reform Judaism to make a greater impact in Israel that has led it to undergo introspection to determine for what it stands. Evidence for this comes from the statement of the past Coordinator of the movement, Rabbi Ady Assabi, at a conference of the World Union of Progressive Judaism.³ Rabbi Assabi argued that Reform Judaism has not had a greater impact in Israel because its description of itself is less a positive statement of what it is than a negative description of Orthodoxy. As one leader of the Reform movement wrote in the Israel Reform movement's periodical, *Telem*:

Go out to the members of the movement and ask them what Progressive Judaism is. Most of the respondents, veteran members as well as the new ones, will stand on the importance of the shortening of the prayers, abolition of the separation of men and women, musical accompaniment in some of the congregations and their negative attitude toward *Halacha*. This is a symbol of poverty, not for our members, but for us, the formers of the movement, the leaders and rabbis.⁴

3. Jerusalem, 21 November, 1976. Recorded at the conference.

4. *Telem* (10, 1976):2. In the past, the Reform movement in Israel published two Hebrew publications. *Telem* was a newsletter-magazine, while *Shalhevet* was a journal devoted to less

The feeling of some members in the Reform movement is that "before we correct the world and become a 'light unto the *goyim*' (in this case our brothers in the streets of Israel) let us ask if we have 'shown ourselves' to ourselves enough."⁵ This is to be accomplished, the writer continues, by discussing an ideological platform and delineating what are the borders with regard to *mizvot* and religious ritual. As the movement Coordinator said at the conference of the World Union of Progressive Judaism, only after the Reform movement defines *itself*, can it put forth its "calling card" and place claims before the Israeli public.

The manner in which the movement defines itself in Israel is influenced both by the social environment, as well as by the personalities of the members. In stating that *mizvot* are to be kept, and that they are binding on all individuals, the movement is adopting a more traditional approach to Judaism than has generally characterized Reform Judaism in the past. The justification for the observance of *mizvot* (according to one of the members who feels that they should be observed) is that "as religious Jews we surely do not want a life style that dictates that 'every person may do as he sees fit'."⁶ A guiding principle adopted by the movement in determining which *mizvot* are to be followed is that of *Klal Yisrael*.

If remaining alive as Jews is the central worry of the Jewish enterprise, all matters dealing with personal affairs are of central importance. If we accept converts in order to "save" assimilating families, it is important that this be done in accordance with the accepted *halachik* criteria of all world Jews . . . we have to provide documents that will be accepted, at least in principle, by all Jewish denominations . . . in other words, everything having to do with religious attitudes, concerning *Klal Yisrael* should be done *halachikally*.⁷

Such a position has implications for the role of the rabbi. In the past, the rabbi in Reform Judaism has been considered to be a teacher of Jewish values, but not an authoritative prescriber of personal behavior. Now, however, some movement members want their rabbis to prescribe behavior, much as Orthodox rabbis are empowered to instruct their followers. The legitimacy of the authority of the rabbis would have to be founded on a rationalistic-legalistic basis. As one of the leading members of the movement points out, charismatic personalities cannot be "ordered up," and legitimacy based on traditional authority can evolve only after a tradition has evolved.⁸ It is for these reasons that, in the final analysis, the principles of the *mizvot* to be observed are those which can be found acceptable by those persons who are to be bound by them. In other words, members will accept as commandments only those items which they are

time-oriented issues. The frequency of publication of both publications has decreased in recent years, and in 1980 they were merged into one publication, *Shalhevet*. All citations from these periodicals are translated from the Hebrew.

5. *Telem*, (10, 1976): 2.

6. *Telem*, (5, 1976): 2.

7. *Telem*, (21, 1978): 2-3.

8. *Shalhevet*, (19, 1978): 3-5.

willing to be bound by. The rabbi can then be a “determining authority” as long as he does not breach these bounds.

The issue of the *mizvot* provoked much controversy during the formulation of the Reform platform. Opposition to viewing the *mizvot* as obligatory was expressed by two of the more ideologically committed members, who preferred that all requirements concerning religious practices be left to the absolute discretion of the individual. As one of the movement’s leaders wrote (in reference to an earlier article endorsing the observance of *mizvot*):

Most of our members . . . negate the *Halacha* as a principle in their lives and actions — and their will is to be honored. We are willing to accept parts of it, as long as this is carried out on a logical basis of moral content or historical significance, and not on the basis of authoritative-rabbinic determination.⁹

The more liberal position in the Reform movement is also revealed in the opposition expressed to the inclusion of a passage inviting all Jews who identify with the movement’s aims and methods to join its ranks. At the movement’s annual meeting one member expressed the opinion that a more open invitation should be offered, not dependent upon “anyone’s agreeing with what I think.”

Despite the limitations on the *mizvot*, the platform, as adopted, was felt by many members to be a significant step forward. As one of the Israeli rabbinical students said, “This platform shows that we are not merely Orthodox Judaism minus.”

As mentioned, the platform reflects both the influence of the social environment and the members’ personalities. First, the principle of observing those commandments which make larger societal participation possible demonstrated an openness to the larger environment. An example is *kashrut* in the synagogue. It is a principle of the Reform movement that all synagogue and movement functions are to be *kasher* so that no person be prevented from attending because of his desire to keep *kasher*. (One of the movement’s leaders also mentioned this principle as a reason for his keeping *kasher* in his own home.) By way of contrast, the *halakhah* concerning *kashrut* in American Reform life may be quoted from *A Guide for Reform Jews*: “although Reform Judaism does not adhere to the traditional dietary laws, many Jews abstain from eating the meat of the pig.”¹⁰ (There are other religious practices performed by the movement that are indicative of this consideration, such as the observance of two days of *Rosh Hashanah*. Both days are national holidays in Israel.)

The personalities of the members also affect the Reform movement. On the one hand, there are those who feel that the movement should not obligate members to perform ritualistic rites. These members seem to be more interested in the prophetic aspects of religion, with emphasis on

9. *Telem*, (19, 1978):2.

10. Frederic A. Doppelt and David Polish, *A Guide for Reform Jews*. Revised edition (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1973), p. 93.

elevating moral principles to a religious level.¹¹ On the other hand, there are those who do want a list of commandments which they can follow in an orderly manner.¹² Quite significant in this regard was the request by the representatives from the Reform Kibbutz, Yahel, at the February 1977 annual meeting of the Reform movement, for a set of *halakhik* regulations to guide their communal life. Observance of *mizvot*, as ascertained in interviews with the Reform leaders in Israel, also seems to be supported by most of the young Israeli rabbinical students. The binding character of the *mizvot* may become, in the future, an area of severe conflict as one side takes a more radical position (i.e., accepting or refuting the principle of *mizvot* as obligatory) than can be tolerated by the other side. Furthermore, this raises the question of just what are the members' *religious* needs.

An additional problem which may be mentioned is the implication of a more traditional identity of the movement. If Reform increasingly accepts the spirit of *halakhah*, in what way is it different from the Conservative movement? Is there justification for the existence of two separate movements? Indeed, some Reform leaders do feel that the Reform and Conservative movements should be combined into one liberal religious movement.¹³

The Conservative Movement

The movement of M'sorati Judaism in Israel, hereafter called the Conservative movement, does not have an official platform, thus indicating that it has not felt the need to issue a "calling card," as Reform has done. The argument presented here is that the Conservative movement feels that it is meeting an existing need in Israeli society. Its continued growth makes theological deliberations (or justifications) unnecessary. It might even be advantageous for the movement to refrain from discussing sensitive theological issues that would only complicate its relationships with the established rabbinical State authorities, with Orthodox persons, and perhaps even with its own members and clergy.

The Conservative movement became incorporated as an Ottoman Association in February, 1979. As is requisite under the procedures of incorporation, the objectives of the new organization are listed in its charter statement. As they have been reprinted in the movement's English news bulletin, these are:

1. To advance Jewish values in Israel and to safeguard and develop Jewish tradition in its historical context.
2. To encourage devotion to the Torah in accordance with its developing historical interpretation.

11. See, for instance, *Telem*, (15, 1977): 4.

12. For a summary of the positions on this in the United States, see Sylvia Lawrence Wolf, "Reform Judaism as Process: A Study of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1960-1975" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, St. Louis University, 1978).

13. I have discussed this in Ephraim Tabory, "The Conservative and Reform Movements in Israel: Questions of Legitimacy," *Midstream* (forthcoming).

3. To deepen the sense of identity with Eretz Israel as the homeland of the Jewish People and in the Jewish People's effort to build and strengthen the State of Israel and to work for Israel's well being and for the encouragement of Aliyah.
4. To integrate Jewish values and ways of life with those of our times; to nurture Jewish values as they are expressed in traditional mitzvot and in accordance with the needs of the State.
5. To encourage and nurture scientific research into our spiritual and cultural heritage.
6. To strengthen our ties with all the people of Israel by encouraging Jewish brotherhood in Israel and by the maintaining of close ties with Jewish communities throughout the world.
7. To aid our brothers in distress, wherever they may be, as an expression of the unity of the Jewish people.¹⁴

The objectives of the Conservative movement are *not* to challenge Orthodoxy. In fact, a modern Orthodox movement could possibly subscribe to these very same aims, with their emphasis on the inculcation of Jewish values in Israel, and on the importance of the relationship between Israeli Jewry and world Jewry. This characterization of the goals of the movement is perhaps more for the benefit of American Jewry than for Israeli Conservative Jews. The objectives, as listed, appeared only in the English language edition of the bulletin (which is to be "published quarterly for overseas distribution"). The Hebrew language version did not list the objectives, despite the fact that this was the first issue of both bulletins.

The literature issued by the Conservative movement in Hebrew (much of which has also been issued in English — an indication of a large English-speaking population in that movement) shows that the movement emphasizes educational and congregational activities more than theological and ideological deliberations. This is exemplified by an information pamphlet, issued by the United Synagogue of Israel in 1975, which answers the question of "why the need for Conservative congregations?"

These congregations were created in Israel in response to the search for a viable alternative for religious self-expression. There are those who find a spirit of reverence and dignity in our prayers and are attracted by the active participation of the children and young people, congregational readings and meaningful Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremonies; others seek a creative religious framework and an educational program for their children. Many members identify with our progressive approach to tradition which emphasizes historical and evolutionary development.

The congregational-communal nature of our congregations as well as the concerned efforts of our rabbis to be personally involved in the lives of their members, appeals to our adherents.

What characterizes the Conservative movement, with regard to its purpose in Israel, is the perceived response to the needs of the local population. The movement claims that it is providing services which are very much in demand. In a fund-raising letter sent abroad under the

14. News Bulletin, *The Movement of Masorati Judaism in Israel*, Vol. 1, No. 1. (Summer, 1979).

auspices of the united movement in Israel, the Director of the Conservative movement wrote, in 1978, that the creation of new congregations in Israel has been brought about by a “new and more profound awareness by the population of Israel of the fact that they have deep spiritual needs which have not been fulfilled by any of the Jewish institutions active in the country up until now” (emphasis deleted). It should be pointed out that the significance of such statements for the present discussion is not whether they are accurate reflections of the religious situation in Israel; what is more important is that the movement does not wish to see itself, or be regarded, as a closed “sect,” withdrawn from the mainstream of Jewish life in Israel. It wishes, rather, to be considered an integral part of the religious scene there.

Essentially, the present aim of the Conservative movement is to establish more congregations, whose attractive features, aside from family seating, are decorous services and their more general, communal nature. Little thought is given to the underlying ideological considerations. In this sense, the movement in Israel is not much different from the American one, where such questions are also not often discussed. The “large” number of Conservative congregations (at least relative to the number in the Reform movement) provides them with a sense of purpose and accomplishment. This is absent in the Reform movement, whose slow growth makes it necessary for its leaders to justify their existence as a *religious* grouping. This is to prevent the movement’s being branded a mere *landsmannschaft*. That is not to say that the Conservative movement is not an ethnic grouping, but the continued establishment of new congregations does make the leaders feel that it is serving a legitimate purpose.

Interview Data

Responses by congregation leaders in interviews about the goals of the movement and what the movements are trying to do in Israel support the findings already reported. General replies by almost all of the respondents referred to the ability of their movement to offer an option for non-Orthodox Jews. Eight of the seventeen Reform respondents, and four of the twenty Conservative leaders specified that an active attempt should be made to attract non-Orthodox persons. The other respondents were content for their movement to provide an option for those persons seeking a liberal religious synagogue. Characteristic of the former attitude is the statement by one Conservative rabbi who said that the movement should “reach out to the majority of the population that, at the moment, is not involved Jewishly-religiously, and make them think about areas in terms of their Jewish identities.” The latter is represented by a Reform leader who said that “we are attempting to fill a gap between the observant and non-observant Jew. We are not a missionary society . . . it is the law of supply and demand. We are supplying a demand.”

A “prophetic” approach to religion is mentioned by a few Reform

leaders, as is the desire to provide children with a richer Jewish education. On the whole, though, Reform leaders do not have many concrete things to say about the goals of their movement. Younger Israeli rabbinical students feel that the purpose of the movement is to provide an ideological basis for Jewish society in Israel. While the number of persons mentioning this point is small, the strength with which such statements are expressed is great. Representative of this feeling is the statement that "Israel lives as a result of catastrophe . . . but there is no ideological basis. . . . If there is no stronger feeling of what it is to be a Jew, I am fearful for the future." Likewise, writes another young Israeli rabbinical student in the movement's journal, Israel is "on the verge of ideological bankruptcy. Zionism and *chalutzit* (pioneering) have achieved their major goals and there is now a vacuum in the ideological sphere."¹⁵ The persons holding these positions may be the key to the future path taken by the Reform movement. Their interest stems from the larger social implications that they feel the movement has, beyond their own personal, religious needs. It is not a religious awakening which seems to be guiding a few of these persons as much as a rationalistic cognitive awareness that the principles of a socialistic-Zionistic state which, in the past, had been instrumental in forging a dynamic and cohesive society, are losing their relevance. The search for a functional alternative, that is, a different mechanism for the integration of society, has drawn them to the Reform movement.¹⁶ It is also significant that the proponents of this position appear to be found primarily (and almost solely) among native-born Israelis.

Another theme that emerges from the interviews relates to the importance of the local congregations in the lives of the members in the Conservative movement, to the exclusion of interest in the "national movement."¹⁷ This "local" versus "cosmopolitan" orientation¹⁸ is evident from the comments made by the head of one of the larger Conservative congregations. Asked what are the goals of the movement, he replied that "the movement has no definite plans or goals or program. . . . Our own local goals are just to pray together and build up our own congregation." Similarly, another Conservative congregational leader said that "I don't know what the movement is trying to do; I just know what we are trying to do here." And "what we are trying to do," explained the chairman, is "to assist our own members." The "ethnic" function of the congregations is

15. *Shalhevet*, (9, 1972): 10-11.

16. See Simon N. Herman, *Israelis and Jews: The Continuity of an Identity* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971), p. 202 and Simon N. Herman, *Jewish Identity: A Social Psychological Perspective* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977), p. 191, for a discussion of the increasing "privatization" of Israeli identity from Jewish identity, and its separation from a collectivist approach toward fellow Jews.

17. One of the reasons why the Conservative movement in Israel has not held a formal founding assembly since its incorporation is the fear that hardly anyone would come.

18. See Wade Clark Roof, "Traditional Religion in Contemporary Society: A Theory of Local, Cosmopolitan Plausibility," *American Sociological Review*, 41, 2 (1976): 195-208, for the application of these concepts to religious groupings.

well expressed by the leader of yet another Conservative congregation, who said that "We are rather egocentric — we are concerned about our own synagogue. Many of us came with our families but left behind family, and the congregation is like one extended family."

The preoccupation with the local congregation has, also, in some instances, affected the relationship with the rabbis. One chairman complained that there was some friction with the rabbi because he spent too much time on national affairs and, consequently, devoted less time to congregational affairs. This complaint was made in a Conservative congregation, and it is to be noted that it is the Conservative rabbis who are very much active and powerful on the national scene. The limited time that is available for congregational rabbis to devote to national affairs because of the demands of their local congregations has implications for the forging of a "national movement."

The "local" congregational orientation, as stated, seems to characterize the Conservative movement more than it does Reform. The observation presented here is that the Conservative movement has no formally thought out movement goals. It is catering to the requirements of its local members, many of whom have similar needs, scattered though the members are throughout the country. The theological considerations of the members are secondary. As one Conservative chairman stated:

The only people who know what the Conservative movement is here are those who know it from the United States or those few who take the time to sit down and read the theory of what the movement is. To the rest of the people it is mostly a question of the acceptability and compatibility of (their local congregation) rather than a question of the principles behind it.

Finally, an ethnic function concerning the absorption of immigrants was mentioned by several interviewees, all from the Conservative movement. The Conservative movement has, in fact, a national "absorption desk," and has sought to establish projects for the absorption of immigrants. While national projects have not been successful, local congregations also undertake absorption activities, which encompass attempts to make the members "feel at home." In effect, this function complements the previous finding concerning the "local" orientation of the congregations. By serving as an "extended family" they are helping to ease the burdens involved in migration.

Discussion

An attempt will now be made to explain the differences between the two movements by suggesting what might be considered a "model" for their development. It is argued that social movements become increasingly aware of themselves as movements to the extent that they are not fulfilling their potential.¹⁹ The Reform movement in Israel is aware that

19. See Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 11 ff.

its growth is slow. New congregations are not being formed. The failure in this regard is all the more striking when viewed against the backdrop of the Conservative movement's relative expansion in the past few years. How can Reform become more dynamic? One way is to establish itself as a *religious* movement to counteract its stigmatization as a mere "ethnic" grouping and as an "irreligious" phenomenon. What the Reform movement has done, in this regard, is to formulate a platform which emphasizes what it is, rather than what it is not. Inasmuch as the values of the general society seem to be more receptive to Orthodoxy rather than to non-Orthodoxy, the values encompassed in the platform will have to reflect this situation. This is because the movement's aim is to gain acceptance in the larger society. Of necessity, then, it will appear more religiously traditional as it reflects on what it represents as a religious denomination. The degree to which the Reform movement in Israel is more "open" to the larger society is particularly demonstrated by its adoption of the principle of *Klal Yisrael* in determining which *mizvot* are to be kept. Conformity with the religious precepts accepted by the majority of Israel's Jews (at least in principle, if not in practice) would constitute a first step in gaining legitimacy.

The platform formulated by the Reform movement may eventually help it to attract new members and achieve further growth. At the same time, it may serve as a dividing force. Persons less interested in new religious demands may be alienated if such demands are, in fact, incorporated into religious practice. A further question that is raised is whether a more religious Reform movement will strike a responsive chord in Israeli society. Although the number of persons involved is too small to produce an answer, the question must be raised: Is it a religious need which is attracting the young Israeli leaders or, as has been indicated, might some persons see the movement as a replacement for a Zionist-socialist credo?

The situation in the Conservative movement is somewhat more complex. It might be argued that, objectively, the number of congregations founded is insignificant within the framework of Israeli Judaism. (Estimates place the number of Orthodox congregations at over seven thousand.) On the other hand, Conservative leaders do perceive the movement to be successful, especially when comparing it with the Reform. What the Conservatives are trying to achieve is to consolidate their gains and to build a national movement. The problem which they face is that local congregational members may not feel as much of a need for a "national movement" as for adequate, autonomous congregations. To some degree, local leaders who also fill national positions in the movement face a role conflict. On the one hand, their members expect them to be loyal to the congregation, and to dedicate their resources to its development. On the other hand, there is some demand on the national level for uniformity throughout the congregations and for a national viewpoint.

It may be surmised that, on the local level, members are not anxious

to be placed in a situation in which there is much tension with their neighbors, and there is some pressure on them to refrain from activities which might lead to friction in local religious and municipal councils. As a result, religious behavior in the local synagogue becomes more traditional. (An example of this is the willingness of several of the Conservative congregations to have separate seating, so as not to antagonize the local religious council.) National leaders (who are, in most cases, also local officials) must then consider the needs of their local congregations.

Thus, the platforms and the leaders' statements reflect the situation of the movements in Israel at this time. Both are still struggling to ensure their continued growth in the future in light of their development to date. A question of interest for the future is how the movements, as they evolve in Israel, will interact with, and have implications for, the world movements of Conservative and Reform Judaism as religious denominations. More basically, there is the question whether the organizational transformation of the movements in Israel will be successful in attracting large numbers of native Israelis to their midst in the future.

Religious Pluralism in Israel

ROBERT GORDIS

OVER AND BEYOND THE RECURRENT CRISES — political, economic and military — which have characterized Israel's thirty-four year history, the State has experienced an ongoing religious and moral crisis. Ever since its creation, it has "entrusted" religion to an official Orthodox bureaucracy. Following an earlier precedent, deriving from the Turkish era and the British mandatory periods, which recognized various religious communities, matters of personal status such as marriage, divorce and inheritance have been placed under the control of the Orthodox rabbinate. The supervision of *shehitah*, the maintenance of *kashrut* in hotels and institutions and in public agencies, Sabbath observance (in varying degree) in buses and trains and other fields have been supervised by the religious Establishment. Much of this activity has been salutary and unexceptionable.

However, the official leadership has also utilized its power to deny equality of government support and public recognition to other religious movements like Conservatism and Reform. Physical interference with non-Orthodox services has not been uncommon. Bigotry and intolerance are often elevated to the status of public pronouncement and government policy. Sensational cases bordering on the scandalous, involving moral issues or revealing grave ethical lapses in the Establishment, are all too frequent.

Yet, in spite of all efforts to suppress the varieties of non-Orthodox Judaism, which include growing numbers of native Israeli groups striving for new and creative forms of religious expression, these movements continue to grow. The dangers of a *Kulturkampf*, which both Reform and Conservative leadership have steadfastly avoided in the past, are nonetheless real. The majority of Israelis, who are not Orthodox, have thus far been effectively precluded by every conceivable means from exploring the values to be found in a modern traditional Judaism based on the halakhah (Conservatism) and on a non-halakhic version of Judaism (Reform).

The problems and the perils of the present situation go beyond the confines of the State of Israel. They impinge upon the status of Jews throughout the world. Recently, Agudat Yisrael, with the tacit support of more moderate Orthodox elements, sought to amend the Law of Return. They proposed adding a phrase that would stipulate that only conversions "according to the halakhah" would be recognized as valid. Both the advocates and the opponents of the amendment understood that the phrase in question is code language meaning "under the authority, and with the approval of, the Orthodox religious Establishment." The amendment threatens the legitimacy and equality of all Jews throughout the

world who are not Orthodox — in other words, the overwhelming majority of Diaspora Jewry, whether in America or elsewhere, as well as most Israeli Jews. Agudat Yisrael relied on its three strategic votes in the Knesset to ram the amendment through. The effort failed — for the time being.

Many other steps taken to hobble the development of non-Orthodox Judaism in Israel may be anticipated. Recently there was the public announcement by the two rabbis of Jerusalem that hearing the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah in a Conservative synagogue is forbidden and does not fulfill the *mizvah*.

I have described the political and economic disabilities confronting non-Orthodox Judaism in Israel in some detail, because this is the background against which the social, ethical and intellectual problems of religion in Israel must be viewed. What is more, it is clear that the problems of religion in Israel will not go away, and that, on the contrary, the perennial crisis will gain in intensity in the future. That is why the present status of the various types of non-Orthodox Judaism there should be of concern to every intelligent Jew both in Israel or abroad, whether religious or secular.

The present symposium had its origin in a paper being published in this issue of JUDAISM entitled: "Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel: Aims and Platforms," by Ephraim Tabory of Bar Ilan University, the Orthodox university in Israel. It is based upon extensive research embodied in a recently completed dissertation and we have invited a select group of leaders and thinkers associated with Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel and America to comment on it and to share their insights and views on the subject. They were asked to respond to the following questions:

How do you assess the present state of Reform and/or Conservative Judaism in Israel?

What are the prospects for each movement? Are they capable of, or likely, to develop an indigenous base among Israelis in the foreseeable future?

What is the role of the Israeli government with regard to both movements?

Do you believe that cooperative activity between Conservatism and Reform in Israel is desirable and/or possible?

The responses follow Dr. Tabory's article in alphabetical order. They will, I believe, prove an important resource for an intelligent and urbane discussion of the issue that will grow in significance. Readers are invited to comment on the subject of "Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel."

The M'sorati Movement: Reflections and Reactions*

SEYMOUR COHEN

DR. TABORY'S ANALYSIS OF THE REFORM AND Conservative movements in Israel has rather narrowly circumscribed parameters. Being more familiar with the Conservative sector, I will comment mainly from my perception of that movement.

The word *t'nuah* (movement) seems to have, for the bulk of Israeli society, a political connotation. We have a reflection of this, perhaps subliminally, in the statement of the then Executive Director (News Bulletin, M'sorati Movement, Vol. I, no. 5), "There is no clear way to separate religion from politics if Israel is to remain a Jewish state."

Among most of the leadership of the M'sorati Movement, there is the feeling that "Israel is different from North America." They have wrestled with the problem of ideology and feel the need to develop position papers that will translate their feelings into a platform.

Since much of the support of the M'sorati Movement, both ideological and financial, comes from the North American Conservative Movement, there will be a considerable input from the wider Jewish community. In 1979, representatives of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and M'sorati agreed that the Seminary would be committed to "substantial financial support," as well as offering the assistance of the Seminary faculty in the educational program of the movement (News Bulletin, M'sorati Movement, Vol. I, no. 1).

The Rabbinical Assembly, too, has been of substantial help, as have several congregations and individuals in North America. The World Council of Synagogues, the worldwide Conservative movement, helps to maintain one of the oldest Conservative congregations in Jerusalem. It might also be pointed out that the initial roots of Conservative Judaism trace back to the 20s and 30s. Emeth V'emunah was established in 1937 by German *olim* as a Conservative congregation. The Conservative Movement also built the Yeshurun Synagogue in Jerusalem. All of the arms of Conservative Judaism — Women's League, World Council, United Synagogue — have underwritten the M'sorati programs.

Having been a student of the mood of American Jewry for several decades, I would venture the prediction that if there is to be worldwide concern with M'sorati, it can be expected that, as with the American UJA, there will be an ideological involvement by contributors. Some day, there

**M'sorati* is the Hebrew name for the Conservative movement in Israel.

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will be the same pressures upon M'sorati as were exercised at the Conference at Caesarea concerning the structure of the Jewish Agency.

Those of us who have committed our lives to Conservative Judaism in North America are equally concerned with M'sorati and its struggles to attain recognition. We want our approach to the historical understanding of Biblical and Talmudic Judaism to have the same standing in Israel that is now enjoyed by Orthodoxy in its varieties of religious experience. Flexibility rather than rigidity should be the spirit of Jewish law in action.

The interview data given in Tabory's article leaves much to be desired. I was amazed at footnote 17, which says, "One of the reasons why the Conservative Movement in Israel has not held a formal founding assembly since its incorporation is the fear that hardly anyone would come." I wonder about the wisdom of such a remark from a social scientist.

I am amazed, too, at the statement, "Several of the Conservative congregations have separate seating so as not to antagonize the local religious councils." My memory of Conservative Judaism in America over the decades finds that we enjoy, and have enjoyed, a vast variety of different types of Conservative synagogues. In my earlier years in the rabbinate, which began in 1946, one of my congregations had a section for women, one for men, mixed seating in the center and an organ that was used on the holidays.

An interesting point raised by Tabory stresses the failure to develop a cohesive national movement in Israel. Many of the local congregations are little concerned with the goals of the national movement. This is due to many factors, including an inherent parochialism in Jewish life. The element of local practice (*minhag*) is powerful. Even in highly-structured America, some Conservative congregations do not relate to a national movement, while some flirt with the United Synagogue and give only lip service to the joint campaign of the Conservative Movement. Furthermore, though Israel is small and travelling to a meeting in Jerusalem is quite easy these days, it may be financially difficult for people in Israel's strained economy to take off part of the day to go to Jerusalem.

A brief note on Tabory's query as to "whether a more religious Reform movement will strike a responsive chord in Israeli society," whether "some persons (might) see the movement as a replacement for a Zionist-Socialist credo." If I recall correctly, at the last Zionist Congress, Arza, the American Reform Zionist Movement, voted with labor.

To the author's final question as to "whether the original transformation of the movement in Israel will be successful in attracting large numbers of native Israelis to their midst in the future," one might say that the future is unpredictable and prophecy, since the destruction of the Temple, is the domain of fools. Conservative and Reform Judaism represent viable options to Orthodoxy, but what will happen will depend upon the tenacity of their advocates and the legal framework in which they function. Given a fair chance in a pluralistic religious society, they will succeed.

The Work of the World Union for Progressive Judaism

NISSIM ELIAD

THE ISRAEL MOVEMENT FOR PROGRESSIVE Judaism (hereinafter the Movement) is a member of the World Union for Progressive Judaism which is centered in Israel. It conducts its programs in full cooperation with the Union and other independent institutions of Progressive Judaism, such as the academic institution — Hebrew Union College — as well as the World Association of Reform Zionists (Arzenu) and the Association of Reform Zionists in America (ARZA). The two decades during which the Movement has been operating in Israel are not a long period in the life of a movement that took its first steps in Israeli society under conditions of unfamiliarity and rejection. This unfamiliarity and rejection are understandable against the background of the activities of the Zionist movement in Erez Yisrael in the last hundred years. These were years of building and the eradication of the physical desolation. Much toil was invested in agricultural development and the establishment of cities and villages, in expanding sources of livelihood and the absorption of immigrants, in setting up educational, health and welfare systems. No less effort was invested in the creation of the Hebrew defense force that, in the final analysis, enabled the Yishuv to harvest the fruit of its toil and to renew its national existence in an independent homeland.

This gigantic undertaking occupied both the Zionist leadership and the public in daily material undertakings that supplied the contents of the idealistic life of the Jewish Yishuv. Little time was available for dealing with the spiritual needs of the society, which was fully occupied with the work of building and of making flour without which there is no "Torah."

Under these circumstances there came about an alliance between the socialist Zionists and the Orthodox Zionists, there being then no other religious stream in the Zionist movement. This alliance was based on the socialists accepting the Orthodox monopoly over the religious life of the Jewish society being built in the country; the Orthodox, on their part, supported the hegemony of the socialists in the Zionist movement, joined forces with them and were actively involved with them in the building of the country. Furthermore, they acquiesced in the secular lifestyles that developed in Erez Yisrael, the most conspicuous evidence of which was the free and full public transportation running on Shabbat in Haifa, known once as Haifa the Red.

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Another important fact caused this balance between the secularists and the Orthodox. From a legal point of view, both in the days of Turkish rule and in the days of the British Mandate, and subsequently in the State of Israel, the law recognized the rights of all the religious communities in Erez Yisrael to administer and apply their religious law in matters of the personal status of members of the respective communities. Thus, Orthodox Judaism in Israel enjoyed a legal monopoly on Jewish religious life, because at the time there existed no other religious stream in Israel that could demand an equality of rights for its adherents. This balance between the secularists and the Orthodox continued to function after the establishment of the State of Israel.

This was the religious atmosphere in Israel when the Movement for Progressive Judaism began to operate. To the secular society the Movement was strange and foreign, while to the dominant rabbinic establishment it represented a threat to the monopoly which they had enjoyed since time immemorial. Equally threatening was the spiritual-religious challenge with which Orthodoxy was confronted by the Movement, struggling openly and forcefully for its religious ideals and legal rights.

The religious and spiritual controversy among the religious streams in Israel should not have been a stumbling block on the road to cooperation. The real struggle should have been for the conquest of the spiritual desolation that has been revealed in all its worrisome dimensions in Israeli society. The struggle is not between stream and stream for the souls of the others; it is for the desolate souls of the majority of the Israeli Jewish public, in whose mouths materialism is starting to leave a bad taste. The Movement has stretched forth its hands many times in cooperation, but the Orthodox response has been complete rejection. Nevertheless, and in the face of this unfamiliarity, one thing is clear today: the Movement is a theme on the public agenda; its existence and operations are felt in Israeli society.

The number of congregations in the Movement is continually growing. In the last year three new ones have been added, and the majority of their numbers are veteran Israelis, some natives, coming from various ethnic groups, and more than a few being younger people who joined of their own initiative. It has become clear that it would be possible for the Movement to establish a new congregation in every locality in the country, if there were the required rabbinic manpower. Therefore, the leadership of the Movement has decided to found a special seminar for lay leaders to be qualified in religious practices, principles and Halakhot. These people will lead the services in the synagogues and guide the congregations in their first steps until the rabbis will be available.

In the existing synagogues, in addition to services, there are lessons in Torah and Talmud, the young are prepared for Bar Mitzvah, there are well-attended ceremonies on all the festivals as well as on national occasions — such as Independence Day, and memorial assemblies for Israel

Defense Forces casualties and for Yom Ha-Shoah. Social work is also developing in the congregations. One of them runs special camps for underprivileged youth, and also conducts Jewish-Arab camps for mutual understanding. The Movement holds nationwide discussion days on weekends during which there are social and religious experiences, as well as cooperative Torah study.

The Movement has a national youth movement that operates all over the country. These youth have created an educational council which holds discussions on religious aspects unique to them, thus trying to contribute their share in the development of religious feeling. The youth movement has established a kibbutz in the Aravah, called Yahel. Here, creative work is being done in the integration of a cooperative way of life and the inspiration of progressive religious values, for the conquest of the physical desolation along with the spiritual one.

The success which created the enthusiasm for Yahel has awakened the need and the desire to establish a second one. Sadly, in today's State of Israel it is not easy to establish an additional kibbutz in the desolate Aravah. A struggle has been going on for several years, including a demonstration that was held recently near the Prime Minister's office with the goal of pushing along the establishment of this second kibbutz of Progressive Judaism. The youth movement is certain that it will shortly be possible for it to complete the establishment of this new kibbutz, and the creative work still continues.

The Movement operates a high school, named for Leo Baeck, on Mount Carmel in Haifa. This school has earned support and plaudits for its unique programs, and for the efforts that take place within it to develop a new model of intermediate education in the spirit of Judaism, by giving a progressive, contemporary approach to Torat Yisrael. From here have come the first Israeli students to study at the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. With the need for native-born rabbis, the College has developed and instituted an ordination program for Israelis and was privileged to have the first Israel-born Progressive Rabbi ordained in Jerusalem in February 1980. Two more rabbis were ordained in June 1981, and a number of other students are studying to receive rabbinic ordination. They will join the numbers of Progressive Rabbis who are urgently needed.

The progressive rabbis working in Israel are organized in their own independent framework, "The Council of Progressive Rabbis" (*Moezet Rabbanim Mitkadmim — Maram*), which is the body that leads the Movement from the religious point of view. On occasions, *Maram* confers with Israeli lay members of the Movement, many of whom are well versed in Judaism.

The Movement leads an ardent campaign for the equality of rights, including state financial support. It claims the right to be recognized as qualified to develop religious ways of life deriving from a progressive

interpretation given to *Torat Yisrael*. On the agenda are also the right to conduct marriages and to maintain a *Bet Din* for conversions. The late Helen Zeidman, who was converted in the Movement's *Bet Din*, appealed to the High Court of Justice to order the Ministry of Interior to recognize her as a Jewess. After it became clear that she stood a good chance of winning her case, Rabbi Goren (before his appointment as Chief Rabbi) rushed to perform a special conversion for her, so that no judgment recognizing conversions of Progressive Judaism might be handed down.

The Movement has begun a legal campaign for the recognition of the right of its rabbis to perform marriages, and recently a petition was filed with the High Court of Justice for this purpose. Not long ago it held a marriage ceremony for a young couple, members of *Kibbutz Yahel*. Officiating were rabbis of the Movement, with an Orthodox rabbi as a witness. The event caused a storm in the rabbinic establishment.

For a long time the Movement struggled with the Municipality of Tel-Aviv to get a plot of land on which to build a congregational center. The difficulties were many, because the rabbinic establishment is represented in the Municipality in the form of a political party which has great influence in the shape of the municipal coalition. It was obvious that the Orthodox representatives strongly opposed the request of the Movement. In the end, this time also after an attempt to appeal to the court, the Movement won and got from the Tel-Aviv Municipality an expensive plot of land on which a congregational center of the Movement will stand in glory. Similar struggles are taking place in other congregations and there are hopes for their success as well.

An impressive gain for Progressive Judaism — and for Conservative Judaism, working together — was obtained in the last Zionist Congress which was held in February 1978 in Jerusalem. For the first time in the history of the Zionist Movement, an unambiguous decision was reached, to the effect that all religious streams in Judaism should enjoy complete equality in all spheres of activity of the Zionist Organization.

All of these struggles have created a strong foundation for the efforts of Reform and Conservative Jewry against a change in the Law of Return. The rabbinic establishment is now pressing for an amendment of the law, ruling that only "conversion according to *Halakhah*" entitles the convert to be recognized as a Jew according to the Law of Return. Today the Law of Return recognizes as a Jew anyone "who has converted;" the amendment, if adopted, is liable to shock the Jewish Diaspora, which has developed for itself religious ways of life which take into account the reality in which it lives. Due to the joint struggle of the two movements in Israel, the law has so far not been amended, despite the heavy pressure applied by the Orthodox establishment, including *Agudat Yisrael*, which holds the balance of power in the current governmental coalition. It is our fervent hope that the law will not be amended and that a sense of responsibility for *Klal Yisrael* will overcome narrow-minded fanaticism.

The Movement conducts its wide-ranging activities in Israel by means of national institutions, elected according to a national constitution. Immediately after Sukkot 5742, October 1981, the Movement conducted its sixth National Convention in Zichron Yaakov. Approximately 200 representatives, chosen by the congregations of the Movement as well as by its other arms, took part in it. Representatives of the youth movement were especially noticeable, taking an active part in the discussions and in the decisions that were taken. The convention was honored by both major political groups, the Likud and the Labor Alignment, whose representatives took part in the opening ceremonies.

The Movement is motivated by a sense of destiny for restoring a feeling of holiness in the Israeli Jewish public, and strengthening in it the faith in God which is lacking in the secular experience. Likewise it is encouraging the kind of enlightened thinking which is often lacking in the Orthodox camp. Thus, the Movement is developing a local and truly Jewish model of Progressive Judaism for Israeli society.

In Israel the Movement is accustomed to praying with the head covered; we go up to the Torah and read the Parashah and the Haftarah in their entirety. We observe Kashrut in our public life and encourage, but do not compel, our members to observe Kashrut in their homes, and many do so. We study Torah and Halakhah extensively, and if we add that this is all done in the Hebrew language and in a framework of strong Jewish identity, we can understand the differences between the Movement in Israel and the Movement in the Diaspora. The capstone of the Israeli character of the Movement is the special *siddur*, which has been worked on for over ten years and is about to come off the printing press.

The strong tie that joins the movement in Israel to the world Movement is the desire to return to the true sources of Judaism. We rise up against the Orthodox view which holds that we do not have the right, the same right which the sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud had, to continue and to develop Torat Yisrael; to renew it and its Mizvot so that the Torah will truly be a Torah of Life. Through the Mizvot one can arrive at a life that is more complete and better; to live by the Mizvot — not to be tortured by them. Practically, the Movement in Israel is close to Conservative Judaism in its Jewish content, but is separated from the Conservative movement in that the latter is hesitant about taking the forward steps which are essential in contemporary Israeli society. At any rate, there exists a common ground for cooperation between Progressive and Conservative Judaism in Israel. Still, a hesitancy on the part of Conservative Judaism can be recognized, and that is a pity!

Progressive Judaism in Israel is stepping up its activities with the aim of realizing in our daily life the will of God as it is continually revealed to us through Jewish philosophical creativity. There is every probability, and good hope, that these efforts of the Movement will be crowned with success. *Im yirzeh HaShem.*

An Agenda for Conservative Judaism in Israel

HERTZEL FISHMAN

THERE ARE TWO BASIC WAYS TO EXPRESS Conservative Judaism in Israel. The first is to establish a distinct Conservative framework — the Mesorati movement — and to enlarge the number of its synagogues, organizational activities, and projects. Inasmuch as Dr. Tabory and others deal with this approach — with which I, too, am identified — I direct my attention to the second, more all-embracing route of Conservative Judaism in Israel.

Religious Authenticity

This second approach is more ideological than organizational. It relates to *klal yisrael*, one of the cardinal principles of Conservative Judaism. In the Jewish state, this term must be interpreted to mean the mainstream of the Israeli society.

The bulk of Israel's Jews mistakenly view themselves as “non-religious” and the very first task of Conservative Judaism is, therefore, to correct their mistake. By teaching and serving as an example of enlightened religion, we may hope to restore many Israeli Jews to their religious-national heritage. This is not merely an academic exercise, but an imperative service to a citizenry which desperately requires the Jewish religion to provide it with a sense of belonging, faith and perspective. This distinctive Conservative message and religious philosophy can be conveyed within existing, indigenous Israeli frameworks — schools, youth movements, teachers colleges, community centers, adult education classes, kibbutzim, etc., and through the public media of newspapers, radio and TV.

While most Israeli Jews do not consciously express a positive relationship with religion, basic religious concepts such as God (a transcendent or personal Divine Power who, *inter alia*, can readily be identified with our people's historic supreme ideals and values), faith in such a power (“the eternal of Israel does not deceive,” I Sam. 15:19), belonging (to *klal yisrael*), a developing *halakhah* (which gives direction and order to our religious-national society) — not to speak of Sabbath, holidays, customs, ceremonies and prayers — are inherent and immanent in the life of Israel's national society. Very few people can live in Kiryat Shmonah, walk the streets of Jerusalem, serve in the army reserves, or have a son or daughter

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in the Defense Forces, without an accompanying sense of faith whose source is beyond mortal limitations. Without question, in Israel, one's relationship with the Divine is more consistent and real than that of many sociologically-oriented religious Jews in the Diaspora who participate only occasionally in a religious experience. Precisely because the future of the Israeli society is so uncertain, its citizens must root their inner strength and *bitahon* deep within Judaism's national religion.

And yet, the majority of Israelis consider themselves "non-religious," because they do not accept Israeli Orthodoxy, and because they are unaware of the significance and direct relevance of the historic Jewish religion to their lives. It is up to Conservative Judaism to explain, untiringly, the difference between the historically developing authentic Jewish religion and the tendentious partisanship of the politically-motivated Orthodox religious establishment in Israel. For what most Israelis seek, without being able to express it, is a viable religion which responds to their deepest spiritual needs and national-ethical aspirations, and provides *halakhic* anchorage in historic Jewish peoplehood. Without cultivating an ongoing commitment of belonging to a worldwide Jewish people, the three and a half million Israeli Jews remain isolated and vulnerable in a hostile world and, inevitably, their feelings of loneliness and insecurity are accentuated.

On yet another religious plane, Conservative Judaism's role in Israel is to stress the category of *mizvot* between person and person as publicly and consistently as Orthodoxy emphasizes the religious category of *mizvot* between a person and God. The Jewish life of an Israeli is not limited to the synagogue or to religious ritual as it is in the Diaspora, but may be expressed in daily life — on the street, the bus queue, the supermarket, the bank, the clinic, the factory or the government office. In their teachings and, above all, through personal example, Jews in Israel are in a strategic position to project and underscore the profound belief that all persons are created in God's spiritual image and are therefore to be treated with respect, sensitivity and integrity. They would thereby be making a major religious contribution not only to Israeli society, but to the realization of *l'or goyim netatikka*.

Religious Alternatives

The present status of religion in Israel is, to a large extent, a result of religious ignorance. Non-Orthodox children are raised to understand the word *dat*, religion — a term that remains honorable and respected in most cultures — as a pejorative and antiquated concept. The great bulk of the population knows religion only as certain types of Orthodoxy, be they east-European and Hasidic versions, or those of Muslim lands. Even so-called "non-religious" Jews relate (negatively) only to a religious Orthodoxy which monopolizes the country's media. Ignorant about the

historic development of the Jewish religion and *halakhah* they know of no authentic Jewish alternative to the current status of religion in Israel.

One way to change this unfortunate situation — for Judaism's sake as well as for the sake of Israeli Jews — is to have Israeli society exposed to varied ideologically and halakhically religious possibilities. There are notable examples of enlightened Zionist Orthodox approaches among ideologues in HaPoel HaMizrachi kibbutzim and reputable religious philosophers at the Hebrew University and Bar-Ilan University. But neither their viewpoints and teachings nor those of non-Orthodox halakhic spokesmen are known to the broad Israeli public. Surely the Israel national radio and TV and the country's daily press owe it to Israel's citizens to have such viewpoints heard clearly and often. Are these views any less legitimate than those represented by the anti-Zionist spokesmen of the extreme religious right?

The challenge facing Israeli society is to change the climate of understanding with respect to the Jewish religion which has always incorporated and respected differing theological and philosophical outlooks. The halakhic options advanced by the stricter Bet Shammai and by the more lenient Bet Hillel are both acknowledged by Jewish tradition as reflecting "the words of a living God." Both represented Jewish religious authenticity though, indeed, practical necessity required the preferential legal recognition of one viewpoint over the other. Israeli society can be sensitized to the legitimate necessity and precedent of incorporating into its religious thinking varied halakhic views that are relevant to a modern, sovereign Jewish state. Only then is there a chance that the Israeli public will consider religion in positive and desirable terms.

Ethical Nationalism

The unbalanced presentation of Judaism in Israel is not limited to *halakhah* but affects the entire moral ethos of Israel's national life. Religion in Israel cannot only be a matter of relations between an individual and God, and between one person and another; it must also include the relationship between the national society and its individual citizens. If Zionism, *inter alia*, means the conversion of a private Jew into a public Jew — with the needs of the nation taking precedence over private or parochial interests — so, too, does it mean amending Reinhold Niebuhr's famous thesis to read: "Moral man, *moral* society."

The teachings of Aḥad Ha'am contributed to the ideology of Conservative Judaism. His emphasis on the distinctive collective moral ethos which permeates historic Judaism became integral to the movement's platform. To date, however, Israeli society has not imbued its citizens with norms and standards reflecting this national ethos; it has not forged the

civic personality who projects it. As a secular nationalism, Israeli Zionism has proven wanting. The *mizvah* of aliyah becomes pedestrian if it is limited to a normal immigration process to Israel; it takes on the significance of a supreme religious obligation if it represents *aliyah bik'dushah* — ascending to Israel in order to create a model ethical society. Conservative Judaism must clearly enunciate the religio-national thesis that Zionism is an organized quest to implement the Sinaitic covenant through which we became a people for the purpose of creating an exceptional national community, an *am segulah*. Most Israelis have forgotten, or never were aware of, this covenantal relationship; they must be constantly reminded of it. Such a continuing challenge can become a powerful morale-booster in Israel's national life and guide its people's sense of national destiny.

By systematically seeking to influence the sovereign instruments of Jewish statehood in Israel, Conservative Judaism can teach the society that the role of the *mizvot*, is, indeed, to refine human nature (*Bereshit Rabba* 44a). This idealistic, though admittedly uphill, national educational task can become the crowning contribution of Conservative Judaism in the Jewish national homeland.

Projections for Reform and Conservatism in Israel

THEODORE FRIEDMAN

THE PUBLICATION OF EPHRAIM TABORY'S essay, "Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel: Aims and Platforms" affords meet occasion for this writer (a twelve-year resident of Israel intimately involved in the local Conservative movement) to reflect on a number of questions that his analysis raises. First, the fact that both movements, within the past decade, have enjoyed but relatively small growth — ten Reform congregations to approximately forty Conservative — calls for some explanation. In the experience of both segments of the Israeli population, Ashkenazic and Sephardic, Jewish religion is represented by Orthodoxy and Orthodox practice. Both movements are Western European and American phenomena and were totally unknown in the countries of origin of the Sephardic community. Nor did they ever take root in Eastern Europe, the home of the bulk of Ashkenazic Jewry. So that, even for those who have abandoned Orthodox belief and practice, the latter still remains the readily recognizable and sole legitimate version of Jewish religion. This writer recalls, for example, a television debate on the subject some time back in which this position was taken by an avowed secularist, one of our more prominent publicists.

Superimposed on this conceptual image, is the fact that approximately 80% of Israeli children receive their education in schools that are pronouncedly secular in orientation. While both Reform and Conservatism operate against this enormous handicap, the growth of Reform is further impeded by the image projected by the movement in the States, glimpses of which occasionally reach the general Israeli public. From time to time, our television brings us reportage on both movements in the States and, more than once, it has included the scene of a Reform Rabbi performing an intermarriage together with a Christian Minister. The reaction to the scene by the average Israeli, secularist or not, is one of repulsion. No wonder that a leading official of the local Reform movement once declared, off the record, "The Reform movement in the States is an albatross around our neck." Incidentally, it is revealing that in Israel the movement uses the appellation Progressive Judaism and not Reform.

Given the situation as described above, what are the prospects for the growth of these movements? While prophecy is notoriously hazardous, a

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balanced, tentative assessment may be put forward. Such a scenario would have to take a number of emergent factors into account.

The Yom Kippur War was, among other things, the catalyst of a spiritual identity crisis long in the making, a crisis to which Dr. Tabori refers. Added to that upheaval and, in a large measure reflective of it, is the phenomenon of *yeridah*. While no serious study of the social and cultural background of the current wave of *yordim* is available, there are enough signs to indicate that they include young people born and reared in kibbuzim and presumably imbued with a Socialist-Zionist faith that has evaporated. This fact, among others, has given rise to a fairly widespread awareness that a secular ideology is a broken reed incapable of sustaining the Zionist enterprise at the present juncture.

Hence, there are numerous straws in the wind that we are at the beginning of a revision in the attitude of the secular sector of the population towards the Jewish religious tradition. Left wing groups which had presumed that their account with the Jewish religion was permanently closed are beginning to re-open the complex of questions about the relationship between Jewish nationalism, Jewish religion and the Jewish people. One such instance, for example, is the recent conference on the subject sponsored by Kibbuz Arzi (Mapam) attended by four hundred young kibbuz members. A decade or so ago, such a conference under the sponsorship of Mapam would have been unthinkable. If further evidence is needed of the growing openness towards the classical sources of the Jewish religion, one notes the increasing number of public discussions, study groups and books devoted to a re-examination and interpretation of various aspects of the Jewish religious experience. Though no figures can be cited, there is the distinct impression that the number of people, for example, who attend the synagogue on the *Yamin Noraim* is on the increase.

There is yet another factor to be reckoned with, a factor that, in the decades to come, is certain to play a growing role in the future of Conservative Judaism. Within the past few years, adherents of the latter have succeeded in organizing several schools known as Masorati, which is the appellation that Conservative Judaism in Israel has adopted. A provision in the Education Law allows a majority of parents of any school to determine twenty-five percent of the curriculum of the school. Taking advantage of the provision, the first such school was organized in Jerusalem and has enjoyed phenomenal growth. In this past year, two additional such schools were established in other parts of the country. Further growth in this direction would create a native-born constituency, religious yet non-Orthodox, for the Conservative movement.

Granted a growingly favorable climate of opinion, of a positive attitude towards Jewish religion, much will depend on an imponderable — the calibre and stature of the Rabbis of the non-Orthodox movements. New religious movements — and both are new on the Israeli scene — ger-

minate and grow around charismatic personalities who have a convincing message. In the present climate, one or two such people could effect a major breakthrough for non-Orthodox Judaism. Whether such people will appear on the scene is, of course, an unanswerable question.

Thus, there are a number of grounds for warranting a fairly optimistic scenario for the future growth of non-Orthodox Judaism in Israel, most especially, Conservative Judaism. Above all, one must be cognizant of the fact that the accepted picture of Israel as a religiously polarized society, sharply divided between the secularist and the Orthodox, is a myth. From the religious standpoint, Israel runs the gamut. To use observance as an indicator of religiosity, the scale ranges from zero to the most ultra-Orthodox. If non-Orthodoxy can succeed in projecting an image of itself as an authentic Israeli adaptation and application of the Jewish religion in theory and practice, it would then very definitely occupy a significant place on the religious map of Israel.

Does the present governmental non-recognition of non-Orthodoxy militate against the possibility described above? Since we are dealing with projections, we must make the very reasonable assumption that the present policy will continue for the foreseeable future. Non-recognition precludes non-Orthodox Rabbis from performing such normal rabbinical functions as marriage, conversion, etc. and their synagogues from receiving the financial assistance that is granted to Orthodox synagogues and their Rabbis by the Ministry of Religions. Basically, this patent discrimination, strange as it may sound, is built into the Israeli system of elections. The latter, based as it is on total proportional representation, enables the Orthodox political parties to elect a sufficient number of representatives to the Knesset to form a bloc without whose votes neither of the two major parties can be assured of the majority necessary to form a government. For joining a coalition government the Orthodox parties have their price, a price which includes, among other items, control of the Ministry of Religions and the maintenance of the religious status quo. When out of power, both major parties have, in their time, included planks in their election platforms calling for a modification of the present system that would prevent minority parties from wielding power far beyond anything warranted by the actual number of their adherents. But, once in power, thanks to coalition politics, they have quietly shelved the promise, since electoral reform is a *bête noire* to the minority parties. Neither of the two dominant parties is prepared to disaffect the minority partners and fall from power over the issue. Only if a major party should capture an outright majority at the polls — an unlikely prospect in the present political constellation — can one begin to contemplate a change from the present set-up that effectively bars non-Orthodox religious groups from official recognition. Thus, one may safely assume that the current system will be with us for a long time to come.

Official recognition, if and when it comes, would surely give non-Orthodoxy a very welcome psychological boost and, in a small measure, lighten the financial burden that it must presently bear out of its own resources. But it would be a total exaggeration to claim that such non-recognition constitutes the major impediment to large-scale growth.

We come now to the final question posed by the Editor. Is co-operative action between the two non-Orthodox groups desirable and/or possible? My answer: within clearly defined limits, yes. There is no denying that there are irreconcilable differences between the two movements, both in approach and in practice. These ought not be blurred by attempting to create a common front on all matters. That can only serve to confirm the image in the mind of the average Israeli that Reform and Conservative are identical. (I have repeatedly been presented to audiences as a "Reform Rabbi" even though I had explicitly informed the chairman of my religious affiliation.) The image persists even though it is patently controverted by the facts. On the other hand, there are certain broad issues on which there is an identity of interest between the groups. For example, after joint consultation, each had its representatives appear and testify before the Knesset Committee on Legislation when a bill to amend the Law of Return was under discussion. (The proposed bill would have inserted in the law's definition of a Jew the clause "or converted according to Halakhah.") The spokesmen of both groups opposed the amendment but on different grounds. Thus, in this writer's judgment, each occasion which appears to call for cooperation ought be judged on its own merits. There is a line between total non-cooperation and seeking to plaster over legitimate and significant differences for the sake of a putative unity.

Present Problems and Future Prospects

DAVID M. GORDIS

GENERALIZATIONS ALWAYS RISK OVER-SIMPLIFICATION, and though Ephraim Tabory's observations are not immune to this criticism his comments are, by and large, accurate. The interpretations that he offers of his data are less adequate, not because what he suggests is incorrect, but rather because the picture that he describes is incomplete. My comments will relate principally to the Conservative Movement in Israel with which I have some familiarity, though by implication some of my comments will apply to the Reform Movement as well.

Tabory reports correctly that "the Conservative Movement (in Israel) does not have an official platform." His suggestion that this indicates that the movement has not "felt the need to issue a calling card" is not, in my view, totally correct. Many in the Mesorati Movement in Israel have felt the need for ideological clarification and articulation. The failure to move in this area has been the product of several factors. There has been an ideological timidity which, to an extent, has characterized the Conservative Movement in the United States as well. Moreover, the leaders of the movement in Israel have been preoccupied with the more immediate challenge of creating synagogues and educational institutions. Finally, there is the absence of major Conservative ideologues with the capacity to perform creatively in this area and the inclination to do so.

As Tabory suggests, the Conservative Movement has achieved a modest degree of success in Israel. Approximately forty synagogues and smaller, less formal groups are either active or in the process of formation. A number of these have been in existence for several years and represent genuinely functioning religious institutions. Several Conservative schools exist and some Conservative rabbis and educators are making contributions to the public educational system in Israel as well. But the Mesorati Movement has not become a significant influence on the intellectual, cultural or spiritual life of the country. It has had, so far, minimal success in attracting to its institutions or ideology large numbers of Israelis who were born in Israel and who have had no exposure to Conservative Judaism in the United States.

Over the years, some attempts have been made to establish cooperative projects with the Kibbutz Movement. Some of these have been successful but, overall, the lines of communication between the Mesorati Movement and the Kibbutz Movement have not developed. Despite the presence of many American-born and trained Conservative rabbis and academics in the University community in Israel, no large-scale involve-

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ment with the Mesorati Movement has grown among Israeli academics. By and large, even generally well-informed Israelis have only a vague awareness and a distorted understanding of the nature of Conservative Jewish ideology, the distinction between Conservative and Reform Judaism, and the aspirations of each of the Movements world-wide and in the State of Israel.

While it is important not to underestimate the inhibiting effect of the hostility of the religious establishment and of the impediments which are placed in the path of the movement's development as a result of a highly politicized Orthodoxy, on the development of Conservative Judaism in Israel, it is no less important not to overstate them. In fact, in spite of all the externally imposed problems that the Mesorati Movement has encountered in Israel over the years, my judgment is that a great deal more might have been done had the necessary resources, both in manpower and in funds, been available. From the perspective of the Conservative Movement world-wide, the challenge of Israel has until now simply not occupied the highest level of priority. In fact, in view of the very meager resources that have been available to the movement in Israel up until now, the achievements have been quite remarkable. But the time has now come for the Conservative Movement to take Israel seriously and begin to meet the challenge that Israel presents with an appropriate level of response.

It is for this reason that the currently developing initiative of of the Conservative Movement world-wide for its Israel projects, undertaken under the leadership of Chancellor Gerson D. Cohen, is of such major significance. In this regard, the recently intensified dispute over the suggested change in the Law of Return has had the effect of galvanizing the movement's energies and directing its attention to the potential role of Conservative Judaism in Israel. At the core of this new and renewed initiative is the conviction that what is at stake is not merely the future of this movement, or any other movement in Jewish life, but, rather, the Jewish character of the State of Israel and ultimately the very destiny of the State. Both Conservatism and Reform have come to understand that they can not be transplanted in their American expression onto the soil of Israel and expect to flourish. Nevertheless, each has a significant ideological thrust and an important contribution to make to Israeli society.

Concurrently, thoughtful observers from the non-*dati* groups in Israel have grown increasingly concerned and are troubled by the apparently attenuated ties between the Israeli and his land as expressed in the growth of out-migration and the signs of declining morale among the Israeli population as a whole. They are aware that no ideology for Jewish life and for Zionism which will deal effectively with the issues of Jewish identity, peoplehood and nationalism has yet emerged, and they are interested in exploring the relationship of the Jewish tradition to the insights, the world view, and the technological realities of the modern age.

More and more frequently the Israeli press and periodical literature report on the growing realization among broad segments of Israeli society that the key to Jewish identity, for religious and non-religious Jews alike, must be the relationship of the Jew to Jewish tradition. The common denominator in these reports appears to be the conviction that this relationship will not be a literal and fundamentalist reading of classical Jewish texts, or a parochial and narrow construction of Jewish tradition. Rather, it will represent an approach close to Conservative or historical Judaism. This perceived new level of openness in Israeli society has strengthened the resolve of the Conservative Movement to respond to the challenge of Israel on a level commensurate with the need.

In the immediate future I do not see the amalgamation of Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel. Tabory points out correctly that Reform in Israel has moved dramatically in traditionalist directions. In a somewhat less dramatic way, Reform in the United States has also moved in those directions. Though Reform and Conservative Judaism have developed different approaches to some of the core issues in Jewish life, it is no secret that they share the same universe of discourse. But the divergent views of the movement on Halakhah and the very different styles and atmospheres of the two movements continue to reinforce the distinctiveness of each. I do not think it is impossible, nor am I frightened by the prospect, that somewhere down the line there will develop a single non-Orthodox alternative in Israel which will combine the efforts of Reform and Conservative Judaism. I do not, however, see that as imminent.

I see great promise in the new initiative of the Conservative Movement in Israel, which must develop along several major lines: it must articulate an ideology for historical Judaism which clearly expresses the conviction that knowledge and understanding are not the enemies of tradition; it must clearly demonstrate that the Conservative Movement does not seek to be a pale imitation of Orthodoxy and does not seek the approval of Orthodoxy for its approach; it must move boldly beyond its present structures and expand the list of its conversational partners in Israel; it must open lines of communication with the Sephardic community, and enlarge its dialogue with the Kibbutz Movement and with the academic community; it must begin to speak out clearly and courageously on matters of personal and social ethics, demonstrating that a focus on ritual practice alone is not authentic or traditional Judaism but, rather, reduces Judaism to something far less than it can be; it must dramatically expand its educational programs, both within its own institutions and in the public educational structure of the State of Israel. I am convinced that the necessary resources for such an initiative can, and will be, made available. I am convinced also that this is the right moment for such an initiative. If it is, in fact, undertaken, then I believe that Dr. Tabory's review of the status of Conservative and Reform Judaism in Israel five years from now will reveal a picture far different from that described in his present article.

A Strategy for non-Orthodox Judaism in Israel

ALFRED GOTTSCHALK

I READ EPHRAIM TABORY'S "REFORM AND Conservative Judaism in Israel: Aims and Platforms" with interest and disappointment. The interest stems from a constant and abiding concern with the problems raised by Dr. Tabory. The disappointment flows from his very limited perceptions of the history of at least the Reform Movement in Israel and the peculiar sampling of opinions and documentation which he has assembled. It is strange that he does not state or seem to know that the Reform Movement in Israel or, as it is known there, Progressive Judaism, goes back much further than a decade, having its roots in Palestine prior to the establishment of the State of Israel.

I have written at considerable length on the subject in an article entitled "Israel and Reform Judaism: A Zionist Perspective" in *Forum* (No. 36, 1979). There I document that there were, indeed, from the mid-1930s on, Progressive Synagogues in the three main cities of Palestine, as well as some which developed in other towns. Their budgets were always insufficient; their constant need for financial aid was spelled out in hundreds of supplicating letters sent to the headquarters of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. A handful of pioneering rabbis received pitifully little remuneration from their work and were often compelled to take clerical jobs on the outside to earn a living. Yet they fought hard and did not give up their principles of attempting to establish in Erez Yisrael a non-Orthodox Judaism which would be in harmony with the modernist tendencies of the Yishuv. Israeli Chief Rabbi Kook even permitted Rabbi Wilhelm to officiate at marriages, an action that was not to be repeated by any of the subsequent Chief Rabbis. One certainly cannot forget the pioneering efforts of Rabbi Elk of Haifa, who envisaged a school built on the principles of Progressive Judaism. This institution would be the educational center where not only Progressive religious instruction would be offered, but also where the general curricular thrust would be determined by Liberal religion. Rabbi Elk, as is well known, established the Leo Baeck School in Haifa, which today is one of the leading institutions for secondary education in Israel.

It is also somewhat strange that Dr. Tabory does not understand, or know of, the role of the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem vis-à-vis the development of the Reform Movement there. In the mid-fifties, Dr. Nel-

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son Glueck announced his plan to build in Jerusalem a counterpart to the American School of Oriental Research. He indicated that the building was to have a Synagogue in which non-Orthodox services would be held. This resulted in a massive confrontation and an exhaustive effort on the part of the Orthodox establishment to prevent even a modicum of Reform Judaism from receiving official sanction. To say the least, the failure of that pressure meant that the cause of religious pluralism in Israel was not lost. The Orthodox brought up all their forces to obstruct and prevent the establishment of Reform synagogues. The press polemics and personal calumnies against Dr. Glueck were unrestrained. Yet Glueck prevailed, even over the threat of Rabbi Yekutiel Halberstam, who told Prime Minister David Ben Gurion that the Orthodox Jews of Jerusalem were prepared to go all out to prevent the introduction of Reform services, even to the point of open war.

The establishment of the Hebrew Union College Synagogue, with its indigenous service, has served as the spiritual center for Progressive Judaism in Israel, and continues to do so. Thousands of Israelis and non-Israelis alike have worshipped within its walls, participating in religious services that are read from Siddurim and Mahzorim especially written for the College's services in Jerusalem.

In 1971, I developed at our Jerusalem School an intensive Jewish Studies program leading to the ordination of Israelis as rabbis for the Progressive Movement in Israel. To date, three young men have been ordained, and eight others are presently in the course of study.

Dr. Taborly does, however, point to certain abiding questions which require continuous study and clarification, namely, what is to be the continuing, identifiable core that will differentiate Reform Progressive Judaism in Israel from the other more dominant Jewish religious experience there. I am not at all concerned that Reform Judaism will remain the smallest of the religious movements in Israel for a time to come. It was that when Isaac Mayer Wise founded it in America. I am concerned, however, that Progressive Judaism retain a distinctive nature so as not to permit its classification as being "less" than the other contemporary religious expressions in Israel. It certainly will be different. It is undeniably a correct assertion to hold that Progressive Judaism in Israel cannot be solely imparted as an ideology; neither can Conservative Judaism. It must develop along indigenous lines, and it must engage in a process of continuing self-definition. The greatest asset, and problem, of Progressive Judaism is that it is non-dogmatic in nature; that it appeals to voluntary rather than compulsory belief; that it is, in fact, concerned with the larger world in which it finds itself and does not merely attempt to replicate narrow-gauged ritualistic expressions of the various Jewish Orthodoxies afloat in Israel today.

What has distinguished the Reform Movement outside of Israel, and in Israel as well, has been its concern for the dimension of social justice in

particular. As a religious grouping in Israel, it is unique in that respect. That passion is, in fact, its appeal to the various kibbutz movements which have expressed interest in developing a variation of Progressive Judaism of their own.

One aspect regarding Progressive Judaism which continues to intrigue me is that despite our relatively small numbers in Israel, which I believe are growing, the quality of the person who is attracted to the Progressive Movement in Israel is quite compelling. The profile I find is that of an intellectual, caring Jew, wishing to enter the lifestream of Judaism on some significant level for him/ or her/self. The younger generation reflects an individual who comes with more questions than we have answers, interested less in organizational affiliation than in intellectual and spiritual stimulation. It is from this group that we receive continuing moral and spiritual support.

The Reform and Conservative Movements in Israel have, in the current government coalition, their most implacable foes and opponents. Bellicose advertisements in Israeli newspapers indicating that Israelis have not fulfilled their religious obligations if they worship in a Conservative synagogue for the holidays is but a showpiece example of this hostility and obstructionism. If our Conservative brethren were even more committed to halakhah, it still would not matter to the Orthodox whether they were Conservative or Reform. As far as they are concerned, we are both intrinsically *tref*. It is incumbent upon Jews of the Diaspora, particularly the American Diaspora, to place counter pressure on the Israeli government to avert even more serious incursions in our religious freedom and the hard-won status quo, tenuous as it may seem, that we now have.

I believe that the Reform and Conservative Movements in Israel will share a common destiny. One will not flourish at the expense of the other. Both will either find a solid rooting or both will eventually blow away. My own conviction is that both will find solid rooting but will, of necessity, remain limited in size, unless the movements can find a way to make inroads into the large Sephardic sector of the Israeli population through a conscious and strenuous effort of outreach. I also believe that the Russian-Jewish immigration provides a rich opportunity for the Conservative and Reform Movements to win for Judaism the members of this aliyah who, by and large, reject Orthodoxy and who would, I think, be responsive to an integrated modernist approach to Judaism.

I strongly disagree with Dr. Tabor when he states, "It is the relative failure of Reform Judaism to make a greater impact in Israel that has led it to undergo introspection to determine for what it stands." I think that the case is just the contrary. Because Reform Judaism has had an impact, however one defines that, it has led to introspection not only among its own adherents but among other Jews as well and to the probing of the direction of Judaism in the so-called totally Jewish society which is Israel. There is no question, however, that Reform Judaism has not yet nurtured

a sabra who is a Reform theologian, capable of addressing the Israeli mind in a compelling and articulate manner; neither has the Conservative Movement. Sadder yet is that it is especially true of the Orthodox Movement which, despite its brandishing of secular power, has not developed in this generation a great spirit and moral personality such as Rav Kook.

It must further be pointed out that the Reform Movement in the last decade has made an extraordinary effort to create a new center for its spiritual being. The World Union for Progressive Judaism has its headquarters at the Hebrew Union College in Israel. The College itself has initiated a rabbinic training program, as well as other programs, that will prepare lay leadership for an indigenous Reform Judaism for Israel. The Reform Movement, in establishing its rabbinic and teacher training institution, is laying a sure and stable foundation for the future of its Movement in Israel.

Cooperative ventures with the Conservative Movement from time to time have been effected, but largely in areas of political action and not in joint cultural or religious activities. There still seems to be the notion among Conservative Jews that a full-blown association with the Reform Movement will stigmatize it and prevent its own development. The more numerous Conservative congregations, comprised largely of Americans, Canadians and American Conservative rabbis who have made aliyah to Israel, present a special enclave in Israel today. The question is whether aliyah can sustain that growth or whether the Conservative Movement also must give thought to creating its own religious leadership in Israel predominantly for Israelis and not for Americans who have made aliyah.

If Conservative Judaism, as well as Reform, is not to remain a flash phenomenon of a first generation of immigrants, it will have to secure stronger foundations than now exist with respect to its future growth and development. Both Movements have an extraordinary mission — one I believe to be nothing less than securing Judaism in acceptable garb for Jews living in modernity who want to remain religious but who do not wish to be Orthodox. Such a Judaism is in process in Israel, perhaps inchoate in form to our eyes at the moment, but moving with sure steps to definition.

A Response to Tabor

RICHARD G. HIRSCH

I WILL RELATE TO THE QUESTIONS SERIATIM, rephrasing them for clarification's sake:

What is the present state of Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel?

The state of the non-Orthodox religious movements must be evaluated in reference to the state of Orthodox Judaism in Israel. As individuals, many Orthodox Jews are learned, enlightened, tolerant, affirmative Jews and progressive citizens of Israel. However, the Orthodox establishments — the rabbinate, the ministry of religion, local religious councils, the religious political parties, the religious educational institutions, — project an image of Judaism which is retrogressive, dogmatic, militant, politicized, in-bred and intolerant. The Orthodox establishment uses political power to impose an halakhic pattern of religious discipline on the public sector in areas such as transportation, entertainment and health. The total dependence on the political process for financial support has deprived the religious establishment of the prerequisite characteristics of the religious search — intellectual and moral integrity. In bringing Judaism into the “smoke-filled room,” the Orthodox establishment has contaminated Judaism’s purifying message.

Orthodoxy’s “success” in politicizing Judaism has alienated vast sectors of the so-called secular Israeli public who accept Orthodoxy as being the authentic version of Judaism, but then reject that very definition as being totally irrelevant to themselves. True, Israeli Orthodoxy has mobilized perhaps 15% of the population into a militant, at times fanatic, force for the preservation of the Jewish faith, but, in so doing it has demobilized, disaffected and deterred the vast majority of Israel’s population from enlisting in the effort to perpetuate the Jewish religious heritage in their own daily lives.

It is in this context that the non-Orthodox movements of Israel must be viewed. Our target audience is not Orthodox Jews, with whom we have no conflict, and whose pattern of life we consider to be a prime preservative force for Jewish survival. Our target audience is the non-affiliated, the indifferent and the repelled Jews. In American society, the Conservative and Reform movements have developed in a free environment, where Orthodoxy is a small minority with little influence in the Jewish and general community. Those who identify with the various religious movements do so as much for sociological as for theological motivations. Join-

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ing a synagogue is the most tangible way of affirming Jewish identity. But in Israel, Orthodoxy is a dominating and domineering force whose influence — often deleterious — is reflected in the public media daily. Orthodoxy's failure to relate Judaism to personal and public morality has fostered a dichotomy between *religion* and *life*. The non-religious Israeli does not "need" *religion*, because he lives a Jewish *life*, so he believes, without it. The task of non-Orthodoxy is to demonstrate that Jewish *life* is incomplete and unfulfilled without the religious heritage. Given the Israeli milieu, the task of developing a liberal movement is much more complex and tortuous than in America. In a country where Jews do not "join" synagogues, but where the local and national governments subsidize religious buildings, programs and personnel (except for Conservative and Reform Judaism), "joining" is not easy to induce. Progress cannot, and should not, be measured by numbers of members or by numbers of synagogues, schools, or kibbuzim alone. Considering that the major impetus for developing non-Orthodox movements came only after the Six-Day War, and considering the impediment of Orthodox opposition and societal indifference, the progress of non-Orthodoxy is not insignificant.

We have demonstrated that the two major religious movements in world Jewry are mandated to implant themselves firmly in Israeli soil and to share in the sacred task of upbuilding Zion. Though the recruitment of personnel and the mobilizing of funds to achieve this task has been insufficient, thousands of Reform and Conservative Jews have committed their lives to the cause. They and the institutions and programs that they have developed will not wither on the vine. They are the first fruits of a process which will take generations.

What are the prospects?

Orthodoxy at best will continue to appeal to only a minority of Israelis. The consequences of the all-or-nothing *dati* or *lo-dati* choice that Orthodoxy has forced on Israel are clearly manifest in the life patterns of the *yordim*, the product of Israeli society who populate the major communities of the Diaspora. For the most part, they have little contact with the Jewish community, do not affiliate with synagogues, do not give their children a Jewish education, do not contribute to the UJA or the Keren Hayesod and comprise an isolated, immigrant, ethnic cluster aspiring to assimilation.

Assimilation is possible in Israel as well. There is no assurance that the vital components which make for a distinctive Jewish society will be preserved. The non-Orthodox elements in Israel need a religious alternative to Orthodoxy to encourage affirmation and fulfillment of the religious heritage. No one alternative is a panacea. Reform and Conservative are in constant process of change. Both movements, reflecting the more intense peoplehood setting of Israel, tend to be far to the right in observ-

ance and theology from their counterparts in the United States. Not to be discounted is the possibility that an alternative may eventually arise as a revolt, from within Israeli Orthodoxy itself, just as Hasidism, Reform and Conservative Judaism represented necessary rectifications of stultified religious establishments. Whatever may be the form, or forms, an open society in the throes of a struggle to define its Jewish dimensions is bound to develop responses to that striving for the realization of its ultimate purposes. Reform and Conservative Judaism are essential models in the on-going process of defining the Jewishness of the Jewish state.

Is Reform likely to develop an indigenous base among Israelis?

What in Israel is indigenous? When the current President of Israel, Yitzhak Navon, was born, only 60,000 Jews lived in Erez Yisrael. Every religious movement in Israel may be considered a transplant. *Meah Shearim* is a transplant of the 19th century Eastern European *shtetl*. The synagogues in Israel are still organized on an ethnic basis, their *landsmannschaft* character being a major factor in their perpetuation.

As for the Reform movement, it is true that a high percentage of its rabbis are from Anglo-Saxon countries, where the only Reform rabbinical seminaries are located, but, within two years, six of its full-time rabbis will be Israeli born and educated. Its lay leadership is of native Israeli or long-time Israeli origin. The Chairman is of *eydot hamizrah* extraction, going back ten generations. The Vice Chairman is a Jew from Egypt. Of its fifteen congregations, only one is chaired by a Jew of Anglo-Saxon origin. The Israeli *garinim* for the kibbuz movement are mostly natives, as are those in the rapidly expanding youth movement. A fascinating statistic of Kibbuz Yahel is that of the marriages which have taken place there, the majority beign between western immigrants and *zabras*, of *eydot hamizrah* extraction. So the Reform movement has already demonstrated its capacity to attract an indigenous base. We should do our utmost to encourage *aliyah*, but, ultimately, our success will be determined by our ability to contribute meaningfully to the lives of the Jews now living in Israel — of whatever origin. The movement's growth will come from Jews now resident in Israel and, therefore, the greatest challenge is to transform the religious indifference into a felt need within the so-called *lo-dati* sectors of the population.

What is the role of the Israeli government?

The pre-State Zionist movement set the pattern for the relations among the Israeli political parties today. Had the active Zionist leaders who were Conservative and Reform organized a liberal religious equivalent to the Mizrachi, and had the two movements invested energy, funds and personnel in Erez Yisrael, the status and character of the Conservative and Reform movements in Israel would have been radically different.

The Orthodox Zionist leadership built institutions and programs in Israel. They mobilized their leadership. They formulated their goals. And they forged the political instrumentalities to achieve their objectives. They were a force to be reckoned with in the Zionist movement and in the Knesset. The cohesive, persistent struggle to advance their cause forced compromises by a reluctant secular political leadership, which was too indifferent to Judaism and too set on other objectives to withstand the pressures of the religious parties. The so-called *status-quo* on religious matters has not remained static. Ever since the establishment of the State, the process of an on-going encroachment by religion on the public sector has continued unabated and has been abetted during the two Begin governments by the coalition of right-wing militant political and religious forces. In the 1981 elections, the Orthodox religious parties lost almost half of their strength in the Knesset and yet, paradoxically, increased their bargaining power. Their small vote notwithstanding, 55 of the 83 points in the government coalition agreement represented concessions to the religious parties. Nor is the Labour Party immune to threat. In March, 1980, despite promises to the contrary, they joined with the religious parties to pass a Chief Rabbinate Law which contained sections impacting negatively on the rights of Reform and Conservative Judaism. The politicization of religion and the religionization of politics are so deeply ingrained in the Israeli political pattern that it is unlikely that any radical changes will occur. Even should a future government gain a majority and thus not require the participation of religious parties in order to establish a ruling coalition, the religious factors will have to be taken into consideration.

Neither the Israeli public nor the secular Israeli political parties comprehend the nature of religion outside Israel, let alone the role of Conservative and Reform Judaism as major factors in organized Jewish life. Because most of the Jews in Israel come from lands where Jews were deprived of full citizenship and where neither a liberal political nor a religious outlook developed, they have no experience with pluralistic views on religion in general and Judaism in specific. Somehow, deviation from religious Orthodoxy appears artificial and inauthentic. Thus, there is the seeming paradox of Knesset members, themselves non-observant, non-believing Jews, who insist on halakhic principles as the criteria for legislation in matters of *ishut* (personal status).

Israeli governments have tended to relate more to the Conservative and Reform movements in the Diaspora than to the Israeli movements, a recognition that, on certain religious matters, world Jewry does have a stake in the decisions made by the Jewish state. But the power of these movements from abroad, no matter how strong numerically, is miniscule compared to the power of the Orthodox parties in Israel. Therefore, ultimately, if Conservative and Reform aspire to greater status in Israel, they will have to increase their strength in the country. The only way to become

a force is to be a force — building institutions and programs and activating Israeli Jews toward common goals.

In this task we have many potential allies in all sectors and parties, who recognize that an Israel which presumes to be the spiritual home for all Jews must create conditions wherein all Jews will feel at home. The same factors which make for an open democratic society will create conditions in which the rights of all Jewish religious movements will be recognized. The reverse is also true. An Israel inhospitable to non-Orthodox Jewish movements will be inhospitable to civil liberties and to social and economic justice for all its citizens. The struggle for recognition by Conservative and Reform is not a struggle for the vested interests of the two movements alone, but a struggle for *tikkun haolam hayehudi*. It is a struggle to shape “the good society” with which all Jews will be proud to identify.

Is cooperative activity between Conservatism and Reform in Israel desirable and/or possible?

My answer is a resounding “yes.” For the record, we have cooperated effectively in preventing any revision in the Law of Return which would negate conversions performed by non-Orthodox rabbis abroad. We cooperated in passing the “pluralism” resolution at the World Zionist Congress in 1978 and in trying to prevent, without success, the passage of the Chief Rabbinate Law in 1980.

If we accept Milton Steinberg’s delineation of contemporary religious groupings into “traditionalists” and “modernists,” then no fundamental differences divide the “modernists” — Reform and Conservative in Israel. Zionism, Hebrew, Kashrut — the issues which motivated Historic (Conservative) Judaism to initiate its own independent movement, have been accepted as an integral part of the platform and life-pattern of Progressive (Reform) Jews in Israel. The only substantive issue which is potentially divisive is the attitude toward Halakhah, but here, too, the differences are not necessarily between the two movements, but within each movement among the *maḥmirim* and the *mekilim*. The Reform Jews of Israel have established a Bet Din most of whose Halakhic interpretations would be in consonance with those of the Masorati (Conservative) movement. Those theological differences which do exist in Israel are primarily confined to the rabbinic leadership. The laymen of the two movements are indistinguishable and interchangeable in their attitudes and practices.

Whereas in the United States a case can be made for the salutary benefits of competition between two movements with similar programs and objectives, the situation in Israel is radically different. Here we suffer disabilities of discrimination, minority status, inadequate financing and insufficient staff. A united movement, or at the very least collaboration, would provide added strength and direction to the common cause of Reform and Conservative Judaism.

A case in point is the kibbutz movement of Reform Judaism. Conservative leaders have often stressed that the two primary institutional prerequisites for cooperation are the acceptance by Reform of minimum standards in regard to Shabbat and Kashrut. At Kibbutz Yahel both are strictly observed. Many of the members of Yahel are from Conservative backgrounds. Enormous energies are required to found a kibbutz and to establish it firmly during its early years. The attrition rate is very high, so that if, at the end of five years, 10% of the original founders are still present, the kibbutz is considered highly successful. Yahel, the first Reform kibbutz, is already well established, and a second neighbouring one is in the process of being built. Rather than found an additional liberal religious kibbutz movement, with no distinguishing characteristics other than denominational sponsorship, the existing kibbutz movement should be strengthened by the influx of young Conservative Jews whose traditional orientation will reinforce the religious dimensions of Yahel Aleph and Bet.

The kibbutz movement is but one example. We, in Reform Judaism, open our hands and our hearts to cooperative endeavours in every sphere with Conservative Jews and with all those who share our vision of a state that is Jewish in character as well as in name.

Prospects for a Traditional Religious Movement in Israel

MOSHE KOL

APPROXIMATELY HALF OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE in Israel claim that they are Traditional Jews. A minority — less than 20% — say that they are Orthodox. We are living at a time when the Traditional Religious (i.e. Conservative) Religious Movement in Israel has good chances for success. The working population and many liberal citizens in Israel who were previously Socialists, are searching for new ideologies because of their disappointment with the Socialist movement. They will not join the Orthodox Religious Movement, but they are concerned with the education of the youth in emphasizing our traditional beliefs to a greater extent. The Traditional Religious Movement can fill this vacuum. The Israeli population does not have accurate knowledge concerning the important differences between the Reform and Conservative Movements. I believe that an aggressive Traditional Movement which will take a position in areas of religion, as well as social and cultural aspects of our life, can gain sympathy and support in many circles of Israeli Jewry.

Many Israelis believe that our State-educational system is failing to instill into the young generation the great and positive values of Judaism. When the Knesset decided that education was to be the responsibility of the State, and not in the hands of political parties, it was decided to have two trends in the system — general and religious. In the general trend many of us preferred to emphasize three principles: national unity, tradition and pioneering life. I regret to say that the general trend in the educational system has failed in the areas of tradition and pioneering spirit, and the reason is that our teachers do not identify fully with the ideals. We need, therefore, to make changes in our educational system. The religious trend has been influenced by the Religious National Party which is Orthodox. Many parents would like to change this situation, but we need a strong Traditional Movement leadership to demand these changes.

I am sure that if the Jews of Israel would know more about the non-Orthodox religious movements in World Jewry, they would be interested to build bridges with those movements.

Israeli Orthodoxy will do everything possible to prevent the development of a Traditional Religious Movement. I myself had the experience that when I wanted to establish a traditional trend in education in Youth Aliyah, the Orthodox fought against my proposals and the Jewish Agency

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gave in to them because they did not want a confrontation with the Zionist Orthodoxy which is a partner to all coalitions in the Zionist Movement and in the State. Israeli Orthodoxy, which is a partner to the government coalitions, will do everything to prevent Conservative and Reform Rabbis from performing at weddings and will not grant them official status. For a long time, I pleaded that the Conservative Rabbis should appeal to the Supreme Court against this discrimination which is contradictory to the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel. In this Declaration we promised equal rights to all citizens as well as freedom of religion. Today, the Moslems and Christians in Israel have freedom of religion, but not all Jews have this right. We should not give in and we must fight to win. I am sorry that many Conservative Rabbis in Israel have a feeling of inferiority and, despite my appeals, have not wanted to go to the courts. The Reform Movement, however, did do so recently and the Court ordered the Minister of Religious Affairs to explain why Reform Rabbis are prevented from functioning in this State. We will wait for the final decision.

For many years I have been pleading with the Conservative World Movement to join forces, to extend the utmost pressure on the Government of Israel and on our public opinion about the discrimination against our Rabbis and religious communities, but until now I have failed to persuade my dear friends in the Conservative Movement to act. Lip service will not help us, because the Orthodox keep threatening to organize world Jewry against recognition of our Movement.

I can not understand the hesitation of many of our Conservative leaders to join forces with the Reform World Movement in order to change the position of our Movements in Israel. The Orthodox go in greater fear of the Conservatives than of the Reform. On the eve of the High Holydays each year, the Chief Rabbis of Jerusalem publish a statement in the press against our prayers and influence the population not to attend Services in our synagogues. They never make statements against the Reform because they do not feel threatened by them.

The Israeli people do not understand the beliefs and principles of the Conservative Movement. A serious document about the Movement has never been published in Israel. When it comes to a confrontation on the Israeli TV or radio between the Orthodox and non-Orthodox religious representatives, the panel participant is always a member of the Reform and not the Conservative Movement. If we want a change in this situation and if we are ready to work diligently in order to build a Traditional Religious Movement in Israel, we must change our attitudes. Cooperation between the Conservative and Reform is very good because the two non-Orthodox movements can find a common ground in Israel where they can participate independently and not as an extension of the Movements from abroad. Such an Israeli Movement should be proud of its associations with the non-Orthodox religious movements in the world, but we can introduce changes to accommodate ourselves to the Israeli reality. We

do not want to be in the position that we are only imported from abroad, as is claimed by the Orthodox. The Orthodox are busy with religious ritual issues, while we must be a religious movement dedicated to moral, social, cultural and even economic problems that affect us daily, so that we can educate the Israeli public in the ways of improving all our lives, in the hope that this will prevent *Yeridah*. Israel should become the Center of Jewish life, building a better future for all our People. If we will struggle in this direction, we can succeed. We should face this struggle without fear, but with strength and conviction until our goal is achieved.

More Than Worship Is Needed

MICHAEL LANGER

EPHRAIM TABORY'S DESCRIPTION OF CONGREGATIONAL Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel today is largely correct. In part, however, his analysis misses the central question—*can the congregation based on religious worship, à la the Diaspora, be the focus and or source of cultural-spiritual commitment in Israel?*

The student of Israeli and Zionist history must conclude that the basic Israeli-Zionist ethos of commitment projected by the founding fathers of the Zionist Labour Movement over a period of two generations succeeded in making its seminal impact because the cultural-spiritual commitment of its elite was expressed by *action orientation and total life style and involvement* (e.g., the kibbutzim). In recent years, this phenomenon of linkage between total life involvement, action orientation and cultural-spiritual commitment has been an identifying feature of the Gush Emunim movement's elite.

Such total life involvement and commitment is not characteristic of the religious congregation in the Diaspora. The Diaspora congregation is not the traditional *Kehillah Kedoshah* unquestioningly committed to the Sanctification of The Name in everyday life, its earthly existence predicated on the proposition that the community exists for the observance of *mizvot*. Neither does the religious congregation conceivably constitute a group focus of cultural spiritual commitment reflecting a particular vision of Jewish community and purpose (e.g., classic secular kibbutz community). *The religious congregation in the Diaspora, since the Emancipation, has confined itself to being a community of ritual and "cult", (Kultus gemeinde) and has ceased to be a community of life and/or life-purpose.* Maintaining the ritual is one of the expressions of Jewish identity in the Diaspora. But with the possible exception of some of the "professional" Jews (an inherently un-Jewish concept) it is *not* an integral expression (almost a natural by-product) of total shared life-purpose and community.

It is very difficult within the context of modern society to achieve such total *religious community* outside of Israel. On the other hand, it has been one of the signal failures of the secular Zionist movement that, in its attempts to create community and community of purpose in order fundamentally to reform Jewish society, it failed to integrate an innovative approach to Jewish tradition.

There is a place for alternative visions of Judaism in the Jewish State. Indeed, the current polarization in Israel between Orthodox Judaism and

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Orthodox secularism is fraught with problematic consequences for Israeli society and the Jewish people as a whole. It is questionable whether a Jewish State “like all the nations” without a particular and special spiritual-cultural élan and commitment is viable. Unfortunately, Jewish history would seem to suggest that whenever we became “like all the nations” our autonomous existence in Erez Israel became non-viable. However, as Tabory implies, the introduction of alternative forms of Judaism within the framework of communities of ritual (*Kultusgemeinde*) would seem to be a dead end.

In the last five years we have witnessed new attempts to create total communities of alternative Judaism. These more recent developments have not been adequately dealt with by Tabory, whose field work was done three to four years ago. The ideological basis for these very tentative beginnings has been Reform Zionism, a point of view which is a synthesis of two classically opposed but fundamentally complementary ideas:

1. Classic Reform Judaism—affirmed Judaism as a religion but demanded ongoing reform within it. But Reform negated the principle of Jewish corporate community—nationality as a continuing determinant of Jewish existence. Judaism was to be a brotherhood of the spirit alone.

2. Classical Labor Zionism—affirmed the principle of Jewish nationality and community but demanded far-reaching reforms in the socio-economic structure of Jewish community and its transfer, at least in large part, to Erez Yisrael. Labor Zionism negated the relevance and authority of the Jewish heritage faith and Law (*halakhah*) and observance for the vision of the new Jewish Society of the Jewish State. For the latter, it substituted various Schools of Socialism.

The essence of the Reform Zionist synthesis is the acceptance of a holistic view of Judaism and a rejection of the “negations.” Such a view affirms both religion and community, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, but is predicated on the principle of continuous development(reform). This ideological synthesis has led to close cooperation between the United Kibbutz Movement and the World Union of Progressive Judaism and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations—particularly its Youth Division. The result has been the establishment of the first Reform kibbutz and recruitment is already under way for a second one. This development also reflects the increasing concern of kibbutz educators with questions of Jewish identity and roots. The first kibbutz, Yahel, was founded five years ago by Americans and Israelis. However, it soon became apparent that the Israeli congregations of the Movement for Progressive Judaism (Reform) were a totally inadequate base for recruiting youth.

Currently, there is an ongoing attempt (again with the active help of the kibbutz movement) to create an Israeli-Reform youth movement. Most of the several hundred members of the Youth movement and most Israeli members of Yahel do not come from “Progressive” homes. The Youth movement attempts to constitute an independent youth community

whose path in Judaism and Reform Judaism is determined by its members. Similarly, decisions regarding “religious” questions in Yehel are decided on the same democratic basis as all other decisions—i.e., the weekly kibbutz general assembly is the ultimate authority. There is no kibbutz “Rabbi.”

During the past year some leaders of the Conservative Movement have begun to put out feelers to the Kibbutz Movement in order to recruit its assistance in establishing the first Conservative kibbutz.

An additional development which may well be indicative of a possible future trend has been the initiative of Conservative families in Jerusalem. They have established a primary school oriented towards providing a Jewish traditional atmosphere. This school was established within the framework of a Ministry of Education ruling that if a majority of parents are in agreement, some 25% of school time is apportioned according to their demand.

Another example: The World Union for Progressive Judaism is, formally speaking, the patron of the Leo Baeck Secondary School in Haifa. The Principal is a Reform Rabbi. The School has become a centre for the new Progressive (Reform) Youth Movement and has built a synagogue as an integral part of the school. It has also established a popular community-centre type of program. Again, the students and participants in the programs are not associated with Reform Congregations. However, a community is beginning to emerge as defined by common interests and involvements, especially via the children.

The kibbutzim, the Youth Movement, and the Schools are indications of some of the paths open to Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel. They are all predicated upon an involvement much beyond the community of ritual, the *Kultusgemeinde* of Diaspora origins. Unfortunately, the congregation orientation and mentality of the Movements is not changing quickly enough. Even the handful of young Israelis who are recruited into the Rabbinate seem to be Congregation oriented. The developments mentioned above, kibbutzim and schools, have been the result less of institutional policy than of individual initiative.

A central problem of both the Conservative and Reform movements in Israel has been their lack of action-oriented aggressive leadership. They have been far too diffident in not raising “embarrassing issues” for the sake of *Shalom Bayit*. But, then, up until the very last year or so they have represented constituents for whom congregational involvement is a marginal part of their lives. Three developments may change the passivity of the movements in the near future:

1. The more aggressive orientation of those whose commitment is more all-encompassing (educators, youth movement leaders, kibbutz members).
2. The establishment of Reform and Conservative Zionist parties within the framework of the World Zionist Organization.

3. The development of an Aliyah movement (of even a few hundred per year) with an ongoing commitment to alternative Judaism.

Much ado is made of the government's attitude to the Conservative and Reform movements. While the struggle for equal rights for all trends within Judaism is justified, in and of itself, it is not a primary requisite for the stimulation of a "grass roots" Conservative and Reform Judaism. Religious freedom does exist. Nobody (not even the Reform movement) can tell members of kibbutz Yahel how to interpret their Reform Judaism. But the Ministry of Religion will not cover the religious expenses of Yahel nor can marriages there be legally conducted by Reform Rabbis. On the other hand, government recognition of Conservative and Reform Judaism will not necessarily change their marginal nature, especially if they continue to limit themselves to congregations of worship.

My conviction is that alternative trends in Judaism will take root in Israel but only if the forms (as distinct from content) are indigenous and relate primarily to real needs of community and not merely to religious worship as such.

An Agenda for Reform Judaism in Israel

HERMAN E. SCHAALMAN

LET ME BEGIN WITH WHAT IS TO ME ONE OF the easier questions asked by the editor: whether cooperative activity between the Conservative and Reform Movements in Israel is desirable.

There is little doubt that both movements stand to gain considerably from close coordination if for no other reason than that thus they will be able to withstand the pressure by Orthodoxy in Israel to maintain and strengthen its religious monopoly. Both the Conservative and Reform movements insist that diversities are legitimately possible within Jewish religious life. They both demonstrate that there is more than one authentic Jewish religious way. Conservative and Reform share the essential conviction that Jewish religious tradition is pluralistic so they both can find their authentic legitimate roots within it.

The desirability, if not necessity, of close cooperation is demonstrated in a very practical manner by the need to ward off the threat of the proposed amendment to the Law of Return. Both movements have an essential stake in the retention of the current formulation. They have insisted and need to continue to insist that in Israeli public law no distinction dare be drawn between religious rites performed by Orthodox, Conservative and Reform rabbis anywhere.

This leads into the second easier question about the role of the Israeli government with regard to both movements. The experience of religious freedom in America, unprecedented in scope and intensity, has taught the whole world, and ought to teach Jews, a most salutary lesson: in our modern world, religion flourishes best in an atmosphere of freedom from governmental interference. When individuals and institutions are freed from the official religious authority of the state then a heightened sense of personal obligation and opportunity leads frequently to increased vitality and renewed purpose. Self reliance created by removal of governmental support and protection often leads to new pride in participation in religious life, leading to caring communities whose members are dependent on each other's support.

In addition, in Israel the intertwining of Orthodox religious groups and politics, leading to a totally one-sided relationship between government and the religious establishment and with severely distortive legal, economic and cultural consequences cries out for the radical remedy of disestablishment. Surely it is absurd that, whereas in key countries of the world, various Jewish religious trends enjoy equal standing, in the Jewish nation only Orthodoxy is recognized and supported officially. Either all

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must be so recognized and supported or none; and better is none. The Central Conference of American Rabbis in its most recent convention in Israel called for the disestablishment of the Chief Rabbinate, a move preliminary to the total severance of government from the religious sector.

Let each group support itself through its adherents. Let each movement put forth its best and most creative religious response to the conditions, problems and yearnings of the inner and outer world and therein find strength, sustenance and direction. We dare not ignore the implications of the many examples where the legal nexus between religion and state has caused the evaporation of religious interest, enthusiasm and sense of responsibility for the maintenance of religious institutions and life. In Israel, let Orthodoxy, Conservatism and Reform each address itself to the Jewish people there and thereby marshal strength and support.

This is a partial answer to the question about the ability of either the Conservative or Reform movements to establish an indigenous base among the Israelis. A major barrier to a more rapid growth of both movements has been the crushing weight of the massive tie between Orthodoxy and government. It is, however, only a partial reason.

Considering now only the Israeli Reform movement, it has too rarely made effective use of the most important components of the Reform platform — its prophetic element, its focus on the moral dimension, on the arousal of conscience.

There are in Israel today major areas of profoundest concern which cry out for a religious challenge and answer. The gap between the Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities; the widening rift between the comfortable and the poor; the relationship to non-Jews, be they Moslem or Christian; the deplorable manner of much of officialdom in its treatment of people; rising crime and corruption; the apparent diminution of social idealism; all these and many other issues of the inner life deserve the attention of religiously committed and motivated people. They cannot be solved without them.

Let the Reform movement in Israel not become overly preoccupied with ritual and halakhic matters, important though they be. Let our religious and lay leaders address themselves conscientiously and courageously to the inevitable tensions and conflicts of a young nation seeking to find its ethos among a complex variety of backgrounds and in a hostile environment, and it is unimaginable that they would not attract many, especially among the young who are known to seek ideals and moral direction flowing from the inexhaustibly rich sea of the Jewish tradition.

Let a concerted effort be made to reach out to the Sephardim. Their entry into a modern, Western-oriented Israel is steeped in difficulty and conflict. The dislocations in their inner and outer existence are often radical. Yet they constitute a major component of Israel's future. Surely Reform is not ethnically constricted and limited to American or former

German Jews. There is an urgent need to reach beyond the current constituency, to embrace individuals and groups whose traditions in Zionism or religious pluralism are weak or non-existent, to present to them the authentically Jewish religious vision of the just society under God.

This brings us to the key issue for the Israeli Reform movement as well as for our worldwide Reform-Liberal community. What does the Reform movement understand itself to be commanded to be and do? What is its *mizvah*? What are its *mizvot*? What is a *mizvah* for a Reform Jew?

It is axiomatic that any authentic Jewish religious movement must answer these questions in such a way that *mizvah* remains central. There is no religious Judaism without *mizvah*. And the key to the answer lies not primarily in historical or sociological considerations and categories but in an understanding of the inner nature of the experience called *mizvah*.

Briefly, there seem to be two major alternatives. The "Commander" issues a "command" audibly to the "commanded," making the "commanded" into little more than the passively recipient and obedient agent. And, while in this view there is room for interpretation and adjustment and cultural influences and pressures, the *mizvah* is exclusively divine in origin.

The other option is that the "Commander" and the "to-be-commanded" encounter each other in such a manner that the "to-be-commanded" formulates what was "heard" or "sensed" and accepts it as "command," *mizvah*. In this case *mizvah* is the actively collaborative result of the human-divine encounter with the human partner inescapably sharing in the discovery and articulation of the *mizvah*. This opens the process of *mizvah* to the present moment as well, and places the meaning of the obligation of the *mizvah* essentially, though not exclusively, in the human sphere.

This possibility of understanding *mizvah* has ample traditional precedent and is an alternative to the Orthodox position. It is such a conception of *mizvah* which Reform ought to explore, elaborate and make central to its response to life and being. Far-reaching and exciting religious possibilities can flow from it and bind Israel to God and God to Israel. And if it is true that from Zion goes forth Torah and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, then let the Israeli Reform movement come forward and examine such a *mizvah* conception so that "Torah be enlarged and made beautiful."

The Challenge to Conservative Judaism in Israel

MORDECAI WAXMAN

THE WEAKNESS OF CONSERVATIVE AND RE-form Judaism in Israel today is due largely to the fact that these two views of the Jewish tradition came out of different circumstances than those which shaped the life of Israeli Jews. Conservative and Reform Judaism were responses to a revolution in the situation of Jews in Western and Central Europe which accompanied the Enlightenment, the Napoleonic Conquests and the quest for, and achievement of, citizenship. The Eastern European Jews who were the founding fathers of modern Israel experienced these challenges only belatedly and their response was even more revolutionary. They elected Zionism, or Zionism in combination with some form of socialism. The African and Asian Jews who make up the Sephardic majority of the population today, never faced the challenges which the modern period posed to European Jewry and, consequently, they were not required to respond to them at all. These challenges have come to them only after a generation in Israel and they take on an entirely different hue, since the Jews involved are not facing a non-Jewish environment but are part of a Jewish state-in-being which has already provided some answers of its own.

The challenges which the confrontation with modern circumstances presented first to the Jews of Western Europe and later to the Jews of Eastern Europe, were even more marked in the America to which so many European Jews came. There, in a land which had no long-standing Jewish tradition and whose Jews were themselves immigrants and, therefore, at best Zionists who had no intention of making *aliyah*, the natural response to the American scene was couched in terms of religion and particularly of Conservative and Reform Judaism. In Israel, on the other hand, the natural response to the needs of the State and the individual for religious forms were met most easily by the religious patterns with which they were familiar. For the Sephardim, that meant the Sephardic pattern. For the East European Zionists that meant Ashkenazic Orthodoxy, and for the East European religious elements who had come as non-Zionists or as Zionists that also meant Ashkenazic Orthodoxy. Happily for many Israeli Jews who were unreligious, anti-religious or in the process of losing their religious commitment, these forms could co-exist in the Jewish State along with a pervading secular nationalism.

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The consequence of these historical circumstances is that Conservative and Reform Judaism and, for that matter, modern Orthodoxy, are largely unknown in Israel save for that element of the population which is called "Anglo-Saxon." The ideologies, the synagogue pattern which involves educational and social activities as well as worship, are all equally unfamiliar to the great bulk of Israeli Jews. Reform Judaism is perhaps better known than Conservative Judaism since it did exist in Europe under that name, albeit in a form more traditional than American Reform, and at least the name was known to European Jews. Conservative Judaism, on the other hand, was practiced in many European communities under other names but in the minds of Israeli Jews it is largely associated with America.

In many respects, the American association is a disadvantage in Israel today for both the Conservative and Reform Judaism. It is true that the great bulk of the Israeli institutions and patterns, including the dominant religious outlooks, extending from the Agudah and Hassidism through Mizrahi and Sephardic modes, have been imported from the outside. However, while American technology or science are highly regarded and widely accepted, American ideas are viewed with suspicion and sometimes with disdain. This is particularly true when Jewish ideas are involved, since a generation has been raised on the Zionist theory of the negation of the Diaspora and America is the principle Diaspora community.

Against this background it must further be noted that both Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel suffer from two disabilities. The first of these reflects their own failure. Neither movement has invested enough money, manpower or imagination into the Israeli scene to compensate for the fact that it does not have a natural public to whom to appeal. Both have to operate on the principle that they are missionary movements and that they are faced with the opposition that such movements often encounter. Part of the problem is that they are called upon to popularize a religious philosophy in a country which has not been in search of spiritual ideologies, but has been committed to a Zionist and nationalist ideology whose centrality has been emphasized by frequent wars. A related problem has been the failure to propound and to popularize the ideologies of Conservative and Reform Judaism among the people of Israel by the conventional methods which are used to advance a view point, that is: publications, press advertisements, TV, radio, conferences and the like. Conservative and Reform Judaism, therefore, are known to a very small circle of intellectuals, politicians and congregants. Of the last, only a small number are Israelis.

The second disability is the entire structure of Israeli religious and political life. Religion is a political matter in Israel and politics is embroiled in religious issues. At least two political parties in Israel are built largely on Orthodox religious platforms. Both of them have been heavily repre-

sented in the Knesset and in almost every government of Israel, despite the fact that one of them — the Agudas Yisrael — does not even pretend to be a Zionist party. Since every government of Israel so far has been a coalition, the religious parties have been in a position to extract a substantial price for their support, both for their positions and their institutions. Since it is likely that coalition governments with the participation of religious parties will continue to be the norm in Israel, it is almost inevitable that the religious structure in Israel, insofar as it is determined by the government, will continue to exclude Conservative and Reform elements. The entire religious structure — with its chief rabbinate, with its religious courts, with its arrogation of entire areas of life to religious jurisdiction, with its rules for local religious councils and the manner of determining public support for synagogue building, for religious education and for the utilization of public buildings — is based upon political consideration, upon governmental law and upon the assumption that Orthodox views and personnel will dominate the situation. Clearly, under these circumstances, Conservative and Reform Judaism will always find barriers in their path and will continue to be subject to harassment.

It has been suggested by Israeli political figures, who are by no means Orthodox, that the remedy is to import hundreds of thousands of Conservative and Reform Jews. In short, their remedy is another political party. Since this is clearly an unlikely development, what has been said is that the political facts of life will continue to determine the actions of every party involved, whether it be Labor or Likud. The second remedy that has been proposed is that American Jewry make its displeasure felt by withholding funds from Israel. Apart from the fact that this is questionable practice, it is doubtful that the bulk of Conservative Jews and many Reform Jews who are strong supporters of Israel could be persuaded to act in this fashion. The third and obvious remedy, that democratic theory and practice demand that minorities be accorded the same rights as majorities is just not acceptable to those who govern Israel. It is a paradox that the rights which Jews demand and secure for themselves in the democratic states of the West, are denied to them in the State of Israel, because of coalition politics.

What, then, can Conservative and Reform Judaism do to secure equality of rights and to further their principles and their organizational interests in Israel?

Both have embarked upon programs of organizing congregations and youth groups. These have had a moderate success and are gaining adherents. Nonetheless, the great majority of the congregations are small, meeting with difficulty and some only on the High Holidays. However, there are a few substantial ones which have become prototypes of what Conservative and Reform congregations might be. The fact that the bulk of their members are "Anglo-Saxon" does not make them any less Israeli

in a society which is a *Kibbutz Galuyot*. Moreover, they act as a bridge for both visitors and residents from similar communities abroad.

It must be confessed that not enough energy or money has been put into these congregational enterprises. In this regard, the Conservatives have invested even less than the Reform. If the former have been moderately more successful in establishing congregations, it is largely due to the dedicated efforts of American rabbis who have come on *aliyah* and given devoted service for little reward, and to some of the founding laymen of the congregations. More money and more manpower would be very helpful. However, it should be noted that over 100 Conservative rabbis, almost 10% of the Rabbinical Assembly, are already settled in Israel and they constitute a pool of talent.

All these efforts, however, have not added up to a groundswell. This course, pursued by itself, will not establish Conservative and Reform movements in Israel. Other methods and practices are necessary to complement these efforts.

One major way is to attempt to create a climate of acceptance in Israel for religious approaches to Jewish life other than those of Ashkenazic and Sephardic Orthodoxy as authentic expressions of Jewish life. The idea that there can be pluralism in religion as there is in politics is part of Western democratic thinking. The difficulty of translating this notion into Israeli life stems, partially, from the fact that most citizens of Israel have never wrestled with this notion, and even more from the fact that no one has yet thought through the question of what should be the Jewish character of the State. The answers are vital to its future.

The Conservative and Reform movements may make a major contribution by providing a vision of a Jewish State based upon a religious and Jewish outlook which is progressive and dynamic and geared to meeting new realities. The problem with Israeli Orthodoxy is that it has not faced up to the implications of sovereignty or democracy or the problems posed by a world in which there are ever new challenges posed by cultural and technological changes. The recent embarrassing imbroglio about archeological digs attests to that failure. Nor has Israeli Orthodoxy properly confronted the fact that, if Israel wants to be the center of the Jewish world, it must be able to speak to Diaspora communities in the language of their Jewish attachment. That attachment is religious, synagogal and non-Orthodox. Similarly, the secular majority in Israel must recognize that an Israeli state divorced from a religious outlook will be false to Jewish history and will not be capable of uniting the far-flung Jewish people.

It is in these areas that the Conservative and Reform movements can make a major contribution. The most effective way of doing so would be to attempt to let loose in Israeli society the ideas which they represent. This calls for a program involving publications, symposia and conferences built about the ideas which are central in their ideologies, including approaches to halakhah. If efforts are also put into developing programs

suitable for television and radio and movies and for reaching institutions such as teachers' seminaries and labor and kibbutz organizations, the results might be very fruitful. The idea is to invest in germinating interest in religious ideas in the society at large in the hope that it will lead to creative responses among different groups. There are other paths than formal membership in Conservative and Reform congregations. Multiplying interest and variety will, in itself, lead to a loosening of the rigid structure. These efforts might further be accompanied by a deliberate set at unaffiliated groups like the Russian Jews and some of the Sephardic elements who are in search of new directions. Developing adult programs on the Chautauqua Camp model, in which there might be cultural exchange between Diaspora and Israeli groups and in which vacation and education might go hand in hand could be enormously valuable.

All of these programs, and many more which might be proposed, involve a commitment of considerable money and talented manpower. They represent the sort of outlay that missionary work always requires. But we are dealing, after all, with what should be the major center for creative Jewish life. Its influence upon the Diaspora can be enormous for good or for bad. Shall we then be less willing to invest in the spiritual tone of Israel than in its factories, farms, institutions and political parties? The essential need is that the Conservative and Reform movements take themselves and their doctrines as seriously as, say, the Hassidic groups do.

While these lines of action would be equally appropriate for both the Conservative and Reform groups, there is a question which the Conservative movement must pose to itself. Should it make common cause with the Reform movement in Israel? There are those among the Conservatives who argue that both they and the Reform are equally unacceptable to the Orthodox establishment and, therefore, both groups should unite. There are others who contend that since Conservative Judaism is a halakhic movement while Reform is not and, since the Reform movement in the Diaspora is strongly associated with intermarriage, the Conservative movement can only do itself a disservice by allowing itself to be linked with Reform. Rather, it is contended that the Reform and Conservative movements ought to agree to pursue parallel but separate lines of action in Israel.

The latter argument seems the more compelling, for two reasons. First, there is a significant difference between the ideology and practices of Conservative and Reform Judaism, particularly in their view of halakhah. The truth is that Conservative Judaism, both in theory and practice, is likely to be more acceptable to the Israeli population than Reform. To allow the two to be confused is a disservice to the growth of Conservative Judaism in Israel. Secondly, a loss of separate identity in Israel is bound to blur the differences between the Conservative and Reform movements in the United States where the differences in ideology and practice are much

sharper than they are in Israel. The Conservative movement would necessarily lose thereby.

Whatever tactics the Conservative and Reform movements undertake in Israel and whether they work together or separately, they do have a necessary contribution to make to that country. They can, and do, espouse the position, not otherwise accepted in Israel, that religion can be divorced from politics. They can, and do, stand for the proposition, not evident in Israeli Orthodoxy, that religious Judaism should be concerned not only with halakhic ritual issues, but with the ethical and moral tone of the country. Israel is a land which aspires to create a Jewish society where Jewish social ideals and values may be realized and renewed. Conservative and Reform Judaism still seek to remember that we are grandsons of the prophets. Finally, if a Torah is to come forth from Zion and if the Jewries of Zion and the Diaspora are to be united as a Jewish people, that Torah must be in terms which are meaningful to both Israel and the Diaspora and that bond must be something which overarches national boundaries. The religious, national, ethical and pluralistic outlook which both Conservative and Reform Judaism espouse may provide the Torah and the bond.

Inner Weaknesses in Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel

MOSES CYRUS WEILER

THE TREND OF THOUGHT OF DR. EPHRAIM Tabory is familiar to me. At his request, I had many discussions with him, where he picked my brain and I gladly cooperated. In a letter to me, he states, "I thank you again for your great help. I hope that I'll be able to meet you again and personally hand you my observations of the state of the Movements at present and to hear more of your remarks" (Dec. 2, 1981).

I agree that there are issues of great significance in regard to the "viability of Reform and Conservative Judaism throughout the world." Hitherto, both Conservative and Reform Judaism were more or less oblivious to criticism on the part of the Orthodox establishment, because it could not, especially in the United States, hinder their development or status. But the emergence of the State of Israel provides a challenge since, with what is almost a union of synagogue and state in matters of personal status, the Orthodox establishment in Israel provides an actual hindrance. Thus, for example, conversions and Jewish divorces, even if they are performed *Kh'dat U'khdin* but by a Conservative rabbi in the United States, are not accepted locally and require redoing. How much more so is the case with reference to Reform Judaism where often the conversion is not *Kh'dat U'khdin* and the remarriage is without a Jewish divorce.

This has become a real problem because an increasing number (though not as many as we would like) of Conservative and Reform immigrants find their way to Israel. Some of them — converts — feel either puzzled or bitter and sometimes misled by their former rabbis. Moreover, we live in a jet age where distances have disappeared. The United States and other parts of the diaspora are no longer far away, but just a few hours from Jerusalem. Furthermore, the Orthodox establishment uses all the mechanics of modern times to find out about any possible discrepancies by means of a telephone discussion, the telex or an express letter. Through the media and by visits of Israelis to America and Americans to Israel, news travels quickly, and some of the vagaries and idiosyncracies which appear ludicrous to the Israeli public are publicized in the headlines. The Israeli cannot understand that a rabbi might officiate at the marriage of a Jew to an unconverted gentile or, what is worse, together with a priest. This revolution is not only on the part of religious or tradi-

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tional Jews, but even of members of Hashomer Hazair who are Marxist, atheist and secularist.

Therefore, in order to make the prospects for Conservative and Reform Judaism brighter and more secure, we must aim to develop an indigenous, locally bred movement headed by learned and dedicated rabbis who, through their life and work, will show that the movements in Israel are not like those in the United States. This will obviously take time and effort. We cannot depend on the Israeli Government, whether the Likud or Labor. Just to give one instance: Shimon Peres, the Labor leader, opted for pluralism in Israel before thousands of people who attended a banquet of the Reform Union of American Hebrew Congregations in Toronto a year ago. But no sooner did he come back to Israel, than through a secret, quick deal, which took forty-eight hours, Labor voted along with Likud that rabbis will no longer be appointed as marriage officers by the Minister of Religions but by the Chief Rabbinate.

There is also a hindrance to the development of the movements because quite a number of Conservative and Reform rabbis who have settled in Israel are of no assistance to their movements. Some of them revert to type while others are indifferent. They seem to have a complex of inferiority and feel inadequate vis-à-vis the Orthodox establishment, so they choose the line of least resistance. They *davven* in *shtiblakh* which are ultra-Orthodox, in the Shaarei Hessed neighborhood, but not in a Conservative or Reform synagogue. Of course, such behavior is neither politic nor fair for men who have served Reform or Conservative congregations for many years. If the existing Reform and Conservative congregations in Israel are inadequate and do not fulfill a need, let these same rabbis extend themselves and help make a change from within. Amongst such sinners I find erstwhile prominent Reform rabbis who for decades served classic Reform congregations without protest. The same accusation also applies to some faculty members who have settled in Israel and whose presence and assistance could have lent prestige and invaluable help.

Cooperation between the two movements — Conservative and Reform — is not only desirable, but is necessary, because the former would exert restraining influence against radicalism. What is more, the Conservatives should have joined forces with the Reformers in the application to the Supreme Court in the matter of who may perform marriages.

Some years ago, there was a study circle, composed of Conservative and Reform colleagues, who met a few times a year. I was a great devotee and patronized it, but it fizzled out. There may have been some political pressure from above. Similarly, the two groups met a few times before the High Holy Days — once at Neve Schechter and, thereafter, at the Hebrew Union College, when some prominent colleagues delivered sermons as guidelines for the *Yamim Noraim*. This pattern, too, did not continue. I think that some Conservative rabbis do not want such cooperation

because they don't want to be tarred with the same brush used on the Reform rabbis who perform mixed and ecumenical marriages in the United States. However, they forget that once you have mixed seating at a service, as it exists in Conservative congregations in Israel, all is *treif*. In fact, the Orthodox fear the Conservatives much more because, after all, they are closer to them than Reform. It has become a hardy perennial that the two Chief Rabbis in Jerusalem publish announcements in the press that attendance at a Conservative congregation during the High Holy Days is not valid and that the shofar blowing is null and void.

I belong to the small minority amongst the non-Orthodox rabbinate who are not enthusiastic about engaging in a fight with the Orthodox establishment. Naturally, we have to defend ourselves when we are attacked. But South Africa, where I spent twenty-five years and started from scratch, taught me the lesson that non-Orthodox Judaism can succeed, not by persuading the Orthodox, but only by establishing centers of worship, learning and *gemilut hasadim*, social service and social justice. We must grow in numbers and in quality. In Israel, my attitude towards learning is paradoxical. Outside of Israel, the Sunday School is a *schande* school and even the mid-week Hebrew school is inadequate. There, only a day school may give the adequate answer. Here, in Israel, where most of the children attend the government-sponsored public school which is dominated by secularism, the Reform and Conservative Movements would be wise if they added to the education received in those schools, teaching their children the religious aspects of Judaism at least once a week and, even still better, in mid-week classes. Of course, here, too, it would be best if they started and advanced their own full-time education like the Leo Baeck School in Haifa of the Reform and the M'sorati School of the Conservatives in French Hill, Jerusalem, and elsewhere. Moreover, the establishment of kibbuzim, such as the Reform Yahel, and the beginning of a Conservative kibbuz, would help to provide a positive image of the two Movements to the general public in Israel. For example, Yahel has asked an answer with reference to milking on the Sabbath.

I agree with Dr. Tabory that the Conservatives are expanding more rapidly than the Reformers, maybe because they follow consciously, or unbeknown to themselves, the late Solomon Schechter, the master builder of Conservative Judaism in America, who used to proclaim proudly and with a smiling face, "I am consistent in my inconsistencies." Maybe the great numbers of the Conservative Movement in the States, with all its weaknesses, owe their advancement to that formula.

Finally, I wish to say that those who are responsible for the building of Conservative and Reform Judaism in Israel cannot use the same arguments which are used in the United States: that their emergence and spread are justified because the bulk of Orthodox Jews are not observant and it is better to have half a loaf than none at all. In Israel, the Orthodox by and large do observe, at least in regard to the Sabbath and kashrut. Here Conservative and Reform Judaism require a positive answer.

The Mandate for Conservative Judaism in Israel

MARSHALL WOLKE

MY OWN REACTIONS TO EPHRAIM TABORY'S article in particular and to the subject in general, are the result of exposure to the matter during visits to Israel, and involvement in the efforts of the Conservative Movement to take root in Israel. My response is, therefore, somewhat limited, if not biased.

I am convinced that Jewish religious pluralism is imperative in Israel. As a religious Jew, I wish that more Jews would embrace the active practice of the precepts of Judaism, be they Orthodox, Conservative or Reform.

It was not surprising to me that the Reform movement found it necessary to establish "a platform" in Israel. Were it aimed at me as a Reform Jew of many years standing and living in America, I might have problems with some of its contents. But I can easily understand the need for such a platform for Israeli consumption. It highlights and stresses those aspects of Reform Judaism that can best withstand criticism from the Religious (non-political) establishment in Israel and, at the same time, it can find appeal among the secular population. The style of Reform Judaism as practiced in Israel is far different from classical Reform.

I am a Conservative Jew in America. I joined a Conservative Synagogue, and have been active in the Conservative movement for over thirty years, precisely for the reason that the Conservative movement did *NOT* have a specific platform. Conservative Judaism suited me and hundreds of thousands of other American Jews because, while it affirmed its adherence to *halakhah* and tradition, it left room for interpretation and adaptation of the laws and traditions, to changes with the times, and recognized the influences of the outside culture in which we live. It could accommodate under its umbrella a considerable amount of variation in observance, and it is this opportunity for variation within *halakhah* that makes the Conservative movement normative and viable today, as it was thirty and forty years ago.

Given these facts, the Conservative movement in Israel also need not define its aims or practices. At this moment I would doubt that any amount of protestation as to the normativity of Conservatism would in any way expedite the acceptance and recognition of Conservative Rabbis and congregations in Israel. No matter what Conservative Judaism is known to stand for, it will not dispel the claim of the Orthodox that Con-

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servative Jews deny the Torah as divinely written, or that they feel free to break commandments. These claims are made precisely in order to confuse those who see Conservative Judaism as a viable alternative to Orthodoxy in Israel and elsewhere.

I would probably agree with Tabory that individual Conservative congregations in Israel tend to be self-centered and, by and large, seek to establish their own little turf with little involvement in a "National Movement." I submit, however, that the climate is changing and that the Conservative movement, just by growing in numerical strength and by dint of the national involvement of Rabbinical and lay leadership from within Israel and from the United States, is emerging as a force on the Israeli religious scene.

How strong a hold will the Conservative movement gain in the Israeli secular community? That community is divided roughly into two segments. The first, consisting mainly of older members who grew up in the tradition of "non-religious" or even "anti-religious" nationalism, are neither interested in, nor do they have a need for, any kind of religious identification. They accept the Orthodox dicta of the State under protest, and avail themselves of the services of a religious functionary for purposes of "rites of passage."

But there is another element of Israeli society which, though still in the stage of not knowing what it seeks, is nevertheless looking for more than what it now has. These people are not looking for a specific platform, certainly not for some new catechism, nor even for a Movement with a capital M. Rather, they seek a means of religious worship and religious observance that is in keeping with life around them. I have met numerous so-called secular Israelis who *do* want to go to a Synagogue on a regular basis, who would like their children to study Torah and even be Bar or Bat Mizvah, but in a way that is different from what they have seen heretofore and under present Orthodox practices. It is up to the Conservative leadership worldwide (and especially within Israel) or, for that matter, its Reform counterpart, to bring these people into the ranks of religious pluralism in Israel.

New Winds Blowing

IRA S. YODOVIN

IT IS AXIOMATIC THAT RECEPTIVITY TO NEW religious perspectives is highest at times when sociological, political and intellectual changes have rendered established ones obsolete. All successful ideologies are, in their genesis, cogent guides to the perplexed.

Applying this model to Israel, one realizes that non-Orthodox religious Judaism has failed to make a significant impact thus far because the time has not been ripe for new religious perspectives. From the beginning of modern Zionism, the *yishuv* has been bifurcated into Orthodox and secularist camps, both of them set in their ways. The essentially static nature of Israeli religious life — a tragic irony when contrasted with the religious dynamism of some western diaspora communities during this period — is a function of circumstances unique to Israel. The trans-valuation of what had been “religious” categories into a secular modality (e.g., the Hebrew language and Jewish holidays) has enabled the secularists to remain a-religious or anti-religious without jeopardizing their Jewish identity. The fact that an Orthodox life-style is not an impediment to full integration into the general society has insulated religious Judaism, and eliminated an impulse that has been primary in fostering Jewish creativity for more than two millennia.

To be sure, there have always been Israeli Jews loosely identified as “traditional” — neither Orthodox nor entirely secular — who pursue some level of religious observance. Under other circumstances, these might have been expected to build an institutional framework akin to the Reform and Conservative movements flourishing elsewhere. Some small groups, such as the *Mevakshei Derekh*, have emerged. But their growth has been severely impeded by the politicization of religion in Israel, which has given organized religion a bad name among many Israelis, and has yielded a bitter harvest of artificial, but legally-sanctioned obstacles.

To casual observers, Orthodoxy’s growing political clout augurs for a continuation of the status quo. This is illusory. Orthodox gains following the last national elections came *despite* their net loss of Knesset seats, thanks to the idiosyncracies of coalition mathematics. Moreover, there are significant indications that the existing polarization of Israeli society is eroding. “Converts” from both the Orthodox and secular communities are enlarging the religious middleground, and giving it impetus to seek its own group identity.

The pace of Israel’s religious dynamism may be felt in the unlikeliest of places: the secular kibbutzim. Many settlements are experimenting with

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rituals ranging from a brief kiddush before Friday night dinner to inviting Reform and Conservative rabbis for complete worship services on the *Yamim Noraim*. Unlike the earlier kibbutz utilization of religious forms — such as their famous *Pesah sederim* which trans-valued symbols to fashion an entirely secular experience — the new attitude calls for an open confrontation with tradition, to be changed by it rather than vice versa. This ad hoc experimentation is bolstered by an ambitious project being conducted at Oranim, the kibbutz teachers' training institute, in which a team of top-notch kibbutz intellectuals is exploring the Jewish religious tradition in order to develop a value centered high school curriculum. Their initial efforts have produced some of the finest materials produced anywhere.

Dissolution of the status quo is reflected more subtly in larger segments of the Israeli society. Daniel J. Elazar has noted (*Jerusalem Letter: Viewpoints #19*, 8.15.81), that Tami, a political party formed prior to the 1981 Knesset elections, was the first to make its appeal to voters who are "traditional" but not Orthodox. While Tami's campaign had a strong ethnic (Sephardi) flavor and was, unambiguously, a vehicle for the personal ambitions of its organizers, its emphasis on positive involvement with the Jewish tradition on something other than an Orthodox basis, plus mutual respect among all communities in the State was so telling that, as Elazar asserts, "had the bearers of those banners been different people, the banners themselves might have [won more than three seats]."

Both of these examples reflect the changing attitudes of young sabras. Among *kibbutznikim* (as well as those who have left the kibbutz), there is a clear manifestation of Hansen's Law: eschewing their forebears' doctrinaire secularism to investigate, experiment with, and eventually assimilate, aspects of traditional Jewish life. For first-generation Sephardi sabras, whose parents brought their Orthodoxy with them, there is evolutionary movement toward a lifestyle that honors religious values while rejecting rigid patriarchalism. Although coming from different directions, these groups constitute an expanding population, promising a receptivity to new religious perspectives which is unprecedented in Israeli history.

The question remains: will Reform and/or Conservative Judaism meet these needs? Until quite recently, the answer probably would have been negative. Almost all of the early Reform rabbis in Israel were American-born and American-trained *olim* who saw Israel through American eyes. The fact that Orthodoxy was not growing while classical Zionism was losing its hold reminded them of the American experience: how the rejection of grandparents' Orthodoxy and parents' secularism had spawned the rapid expansion of non-Orthodox Judaism after World War II. They believed that a parallel development was inevitable in Israel, and that they, and their Conservative counterparts, would be its primary beneficiaries. Consequently, they devoted their energies to fighting a

“holding action” in maintaining small congregations of western *olim* who had been Reform Jews in the diaspora. They continued to work for Knesset or Supreme Court action that would strike down the prohibitions barring them from offering a full range of rabbinical services. This, in their view, would unleash a stampede toward Reform and Conservative synagogues.

Israeli Reform leaders today harbor no such illusions. Complacency has given way to an awareness that the primary challenge facing the movement is defining just what it means to be a Reform Jew in the Jewish State. However, in the context of Israel’s rapidly-changing society, it is no sign of weakness for a religious group to admit that it does not as yet know just where it stands on specific issues of ritual and theology. Indeed, Israeli Orthodoxy has ill-served its own cause by refusing to face this challenge. Despite the urgings of the saintly Rav Avraham Kook, *kibbutz dati* intellectuals and a handful of Orthodox academics, the religious Establishment has seen its mission as enforcing an unchanging *halakhah* developed largely in the diaspora. The only thing “Israeli” in their approach has been access to the levers of State law.

Two aspects of Israeli Reform Judaism’s drive for self-definition are particularly promising:

1. Since 1975, the movement has been actively recruiting sabras for careers in the Reform rabbinate, and training them in Jerusalem. As a result, the vision which guides the movement’s future will be an Israeli one.

2. There is an increasing willingness to move away from diaspora institutional patterns. By creating its own kibbutz (Yahel), the movement has afforded itself an opportunity to undergo, and be influenced by, an experience that has been central to the State’s national development. Similarly, by structuring the Reform Youth movement as an affiliate of the Israel Scouts, the leaders of the movement have demonstrated an awareness that the synagogue-based youth group format may be more relevant in the diaspora than in Israel. These institutional innovations are doubly significant. For one thing, they facilitate outreach to diversified segments of

the population; both Kibbutz Yahel and the Youth movement include Sephardim who would otherwise have no interest in Ashkenazi-style synagogue services. This diversity creates an environment in which a cross-section of the new Israeli middleground is working to achieve a religious outlook that is totally, and uniquely, “Israeli.”

Where will this process lead? It’s too early to tell. My impression is that the movement’s current preoccupation with rushing to define a position on *halakhah* is both transitory and, in a sense, counter-productive. It has been forced on leaders caught in the crossfire of Orthodox accusations that they are *goyim* and diaspora suspicions that they are becoming

quasi-Orthodox. As their numbers increase and their institutions take firm root in Israel's soil, movement leaders will feel free to step back and allow ritual patterns to develop as they have over the centuries, through trial and error.

Self-confidence will also provide the impulse for the movement to take positions on a wide range of social and personal issues confronting Israeli Jews. American Jews, for whom religious social action has long been commonplace, often fail to comprehend the radical nature of this initiative within the Israeli context. Orthodox insensitivity to anything beyond narrow questions of halakhah has reinforced the notion that issues such as the social gap, inter-group relations, and immigrant absorption are outside of the legitimate concerns of organized religion. Indeed, merely by identifying some of these issues — as the movement has done in its ideological Platform — Israeli Reform Judaism has made a significant contribution to Jewish life.

One thing is certain: the Reform movement will not be the *only* religious group working along these lines. The Conservatives are developing their own institutions, and also contemplating social action. It is probable that parallel groups will emerge from the liberal wing of Orthodoxy to function outside of, or perhaps in opposition to, the politicized Establishment. One relishes the prospect of creative inter-action among these groups, even in their disagreements on specific issues, that will enrich Israel's future as an authentically Jewish State.

The Roots of non-Orthodoxy in Israel

MOSHE ZEMER

IT WAS MY DISTINCT PRIVILEGE TO HAVE followed the research project upon which Ephraim Tabory's article is based. Almost from the beginning, I was involved as one of the interviewees as well as in helping to send out questionnaires to the congregants of my synagogue in Tel Aviv and to the other members of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism. However, as one who has served as a Progressive rabbi in Israel for almost two decades and perhaps as the most veteran, non-Orthodox pulpit rabbi in Israel, I must express certain reservations. It seems to me that this sociological-scientific approach has, to some extent, missed the heart of a very complex religious and spiritual phenomenon.

Tabory questions our movement's need for a formal ideological platform. He argues that "the relative failure of Reform Judaism to make a greater impact . . . has led it to undergo introspection to determine for what it stands." The statement of an ideological basis certainly has deep roots in Jewish tradition. An outstanding example would be Maimonides' *Hilkhot Yesodei Ha-Torah* which determine the basic tenets or "platform" upon which the entire ideological and theological structure of his *Mishneh Torah* is built. Furthermore, Tabory's article notes that there are contradictory statements made by the various leaders and members of the Progressive Movement. Progressive Judaism in Israel is not a monolith. Religious pluralism, which we in Israel are fighting to attain, exists *within* each movement, whether Conservative, Progressive or Orthodox, just as it does in North America.

The more traditional approach of Progressive Judaism in Israel cannot be passed off in a simplistic fashion, as Tabory tries to do, as an adaptation to the existing religious environment. It is, rather, a further development of non-Orthodox Judaism or a "reforming of Reform Judaism" which, in its 19th century Central European and North American versions, had almost become divorced from tradition. This is similar to what is happening in the Reform movement in many parts of the United States today, where it is also going through a process of returning to many of the previously discarded traditions. Moreover, almost all of the congregations and movements of the World Union for Progressive Judaism outside of North America are much more traditional than are their counterparts on that continent.

The Israeli movement has a special *yiḥud*. An elderly lady from a New York Reform congregation who worshipped at Kedem Synagogue in Tel

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Aviv came to me after the service and queried: "Rabbi, are you sure that this is a Reform congregation? Why, there wasn't one word of English!" To which I replied, "Well, you see we are more reform than you are. We pray only in the vernacular."

The ideological basis of the observance of *mizvot* for non-Orthodox Jews should follow the maxim of Professor Julius Guttman, who stated that the intention of all the *mizvot* (*taam hamizvot*) is to enable a Jew to become sanctified and to draw closer to his Creator.

Dr. Tabory queries: "Is there justification for the existence of two separate movements?" This is related to the question whether we believe that cooperative activity between Conservatism and Reform in Israel is desirable and/or possible. Well over a decade ago, when I was the chairman of a joint rabbinic body of the Conservative and Reform movements in Israel, some of our colleagues attempted to effect a merger between the movements with the claim that our ideologies and practices bind us together certainly much more than they separate us. I am still convinced of the truth of this position. However, institutional demands, as well as the ties of each movement with its respective world organization, and, of course, with its American counterpart have tended to pull us apart. As one of our colleagues phrased it, "It's hard enough trying to explain to the Israeli in the street the meaning of non-Orthodox Judaism, without trying to explain and to justify the two variations of non-Orthodoxy." Cooperative activity between the two movements is certainly desirable and I believe possible. However, for the most part it has been confined to the fight for rights especially on the issue of "Who is a Jew?" in attempting to prevent a change in the Law of Return.

The Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism recently won a preliminary battle in its recognition when it secured an order *nisi* from the High Court of Justice ordering the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Chief Rabbinate Council to show cause why they should not recognize two of our movement's rabbis as fit to perform weddings. In the Supreme Court appeal, we explained that the Movement for Progressive Judaism in Israel had become far larger in recent years, mainly from recruitment among *sabras*, but also as a result of new *olim* from many parts of the world joining the movement. Our movement has established more than seventeen synagogues and congregations. It has founded a very active youth movement which has produced eleven *Naḥal* nuclei for the establishment of our *kibbutz* Yahel as well as for our second one, Yahel Bet, which is in the process of being realized.

An example of the indigenous basis of the Israel Progressive Movement is the fact that we have, indeed, succeeded in establishing a *mizug galuyot* (a mixture of the exiles) in our congregation. I could take an example of my own. The president of Kedem Synagogue is a seventh generation *sabra* from Safed. Our head *gabbai* is a *sephardic* Jew from Egypt, and his wife is from Salonica, Greece. One of our past presidents is a

South African journalist and publisher. Our Board members include sabras, men and women of Eastern European origin and, at the present time, I am the only "Anglo-Saxon" on our Board of Trustees. Our religious services and publications are only in Hebrew.

We are indeed attempting to provide the Israel public with a dynamic religious alternative to rigid Orthodoxy or apathetic secularism. There is, in my opinion, a spiritual vacuum in Israel which we are attempting to fill. Perhaps the prophecy of Amos has been realized in Israel today: "Behold the days are coming when I shall cast a famine in the land; not a famine for bread nor a thirst for water, but a famine to hear the word of the Lord."

It is our task to proclaim: "Let us all who are hungry come and partake."



Rabbi

GARY PACERNIK

I am here
Take me as I am
Son of my fathers
I wish to pray
Because the old words
Sing to me now
I can feel their grace and hope
And the sacred light
That shines through them

Lord let me feel your warmth upon my flesh
Lord let me step upon the path that is your way
Lord let my soul be an image in your eye

Universalism in the Philosophy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik

Z'VI KURZWEIL

ALTHOUGH RABBI JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK'S writings, particularly his essay, "The Lonely Man of Faith," are well-known to Jewish readers of English, I venture to offer further comment upon his work because I feel that an important aspect of his thought has not received the attention that it deserves.

Let me begin with "The Loney Man of Faith." At the starting point of this essay are the two accounts of the Creation of Man in Genesis. Rabbi Soloveitchik points out four discrepancies in the two accounts, the most essential being the two different mandates given by God concerning the tasks which man was to fulfil in his earthly life. In focusing his attention on this point the author constructs a rich and elaborate web of reflections, which may be characterized as a philosophical homily of great originality and intellectual acumen.

To turn to the difference in mandates: Adam the First — the Adam-whose creation is mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis — is told by the Almighty "to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it." Adam the Second — so-called because of the account of the Creation of Man occurring in the second chapter — is commanded "to cultivate the Garden of Eden and keep it." There is no need to summarize the author's extremely elaborate description of Adam the First. Suffice it to quote one of the most salient statements about him:

Adam the First is overwhelmed by one quest: namely to harness and dominate the elemental natural forces and to put them at his disposal. This practical interest arouses his will to learn the secrets of nature. He is completely utilitarian as far as motivation, teleological design and methodology are concerned.

And there is another quotation in the same vein:

God in imparting the blessing to Adam the First and giving him the mandate to subdue nature, directed Adam's attention to the functional and practical aspects of his intellect through which Man is able to gain control over nature. Other intellectual inquiries, such as the metaphysical or axiologico-qualitative, no matter how incisive and penetrating, have never granted man dominion over his environment.¹

To these attributes of Adam the author adds further characteristics drawn from the Psalms — especially Psalm 8 — as well as various substan-

1. "The Lonely Man of Faith," *Tradition* Vol. 7, No. 2, (Summer 1965): 12.

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tiations from Talmudic and halakhic sources sometimes referred to in footnotes. These features, drawn from a variety of Jewish sources, are put together with considerable imaginative power. Thus, Rabbi Soloveitchik succeeds in presenting a portrait of the two types of Man with a wealth of colour which contrasts with the terse references to Adam in Genesis, the starting point of his reflections.

In Psalm 8 the eloquent proclamation of the unique stature of Man is applied by the author to Adam the First: "for Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor. . . . Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hand. Thou hast put all things under his feet." If we consider the content and implication of these two verses we may readily accept the Rabbi's assumption that they elaborate on the significant characteristics of Adam the First who, according to the account in Genesis I, was commanded to subdue the earth.

Moreover, the Psalm brings out clearly Man's dignity and glory which are rooted in his ability to make his environment subservient to his purposes. However, the Rabbi argues that there is no dignity without responsibility:

One cannot assume responsibility as long as one is incapable of living up to one's commitments. Only when Man rises to the heights of freedom of action and creativity of mind does he begin to implement the mandate of dignified responsibility entrusted to him by his Maker.²

We learn that Adam the First is not just a ruthless conqueror of the earth, driven by an overwhelming urge to assert himself and excel in his striving for power. His quest "to harness and dominate the elemental natural forces and to put them at his disposal" is tempered by a deeply ingrained sense of responsibility. In other words, there is a strong moral element inherent in his nature which enables him to control his aggressive striving for success. He is also endowed with the ability to create a community and translate ethical principles into legal norms, because a dignified existence is, of necessity, an orderly one, intolerant of lawlessness and anarchy. The author also attributes an aesthetic sense to Adam the First, calling him a creative aesthete whether engaged in an intellectual or artistic performance.

Just as there are halakhot which, in the words of the Sages have little scriptural support, a fact that causes them "to hover in the air," so may we regard these aesthetic attributes of Adam the First. In justice to the author, it should be added that he substantiates this idea of an aesthetic attribute by reference to Maimonides' interpretation of the phrase "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" as the experience of pleasant and unpleasant emotions. However, the author seems to go beyond Maimonides' somewhat forced interpretation since he explicitly states that Adam

2. Ibid., p. 14.

the First's conscience is energized not by the good but by the beautiful, a conception of ethics based entirely on aesthetics.

Rabbi Soloveitchik legitimizes even the intense urge of Man to venture into the open spaces of a boundless universe, no matter how hazardous and fantastic these ventures may be. In his own words: "Man reaching for the distant stars is acting in harmony with his nature, which was created, willed and directed by his Maker."³ This is rather surprising, in view of the fact that God's original mandate to Man was to subdue the earth and not the universe. According to the Book of Psalms "the Heavens are the Lord's and the earth he gave to Man." At first sight, this would seem to set definite limits to Man's aspirations.

According to Rabbi Soloveitchik, then, Adam the First is active, bold and desirous of succeeding in the conquest of his environment. He is endowed with dignity and majesty. He is responsible and moral, his morality being rooted in his aesthetic sense. In the quest for knowledge he is pragmatic. This portrait tallies with the tacit assumption in Judaism, reflected in a wealth of Rabbinic sources, that considers Adam to be as perfect as a human being can be because he was created by God Almighty and not begotten by man.

Adam the Second, it will be recalled, is commanded to cultivate and keep the Garden of Eden. In considering the edifice which, by means of deduction, the author erects on the basis of these few words, I am tempted to believe that he was aided by what may be called the associative method — frequently used in Jewish homiletical literature — though he himself does not expressly say so. *Avodah* suggests *Avodat Ha-Shem* while *Shemirah* is obviously associated with *Shemirat Mizvot*. It is no surprise to learn that Adam the Second is far more imbued with religious feeling than is Adam the First. He does not pursue functional and operational aims. His desire is not to control his environment, but, rather, to discipline and control himself. His enquiries are of a metaphysical nature: he wants to know the purpose of his own existence as well as that of the surrounding world. Let us cite the author on this point:

While Adam the First is dynamic and creative, transforming sense data into thought constructs, Adam the Second is receptive and beholds the world in its original dimensions. He looks for the image of God not in the mathematical formula or the natural relational law but in every beam of light, in every bud and bloom, in the morning breeze and the stillness of a starlit evening. In a word, Adam the Second explores not the scientific universe but the irresistibly fascinating qualitative world where he establishes an intimate relation with God.⁴

It follows that dignity and majesty are not the main objectives of Adam the Second. He is characterized by his striving for redemptiveness or — as the author puts it — "cathartic redemptiveness" which expresses

3. Ibid., p. 16.

4. Ibid., p. 24.

itself in “the feeling of axiological security. The individual intuitively feels his existence as worthwhile, legitimate and adequate, anchored in something stable and unchangeable.”⁵ It might be added that the adjective “cathartic” refers to the feeling of purification and relief experienced by man when he is certain that he has a meaningful task to fulfill, and his life’s purpose is clear to him.

The second Adam is lonely because of his singularity and his deep sense of individuality. On the other hand, he has a feeling of incompleteness and inadequacy and, hence, craving for association with other human beings. However, the community which he seeks is not the functional-operational one of Adam the First, but is what the author calls a “convenantal community” linked together by the *brith* which constitutes a *kehillah kedoshah* united by religious observance, prayer and Torah study. To compare once more the two communities formed by Adam the First and Adam the Second:

Adam the First relates himself to others since communication to him means information about the surface activity of practical man. Such a dialogue certainly cannot quench the burning thirst for communication in depth of Adam the Second, who always will remain a *homo absconditus* (a person concealed) if the majestic logoi of Adam the First should serve as the only medium of expression.⁶

The two Adams are actually interdependent, although the dependence of the first on the second is stressed more. In Rabbi Soloveitchik’s view, Adam the First cannot succeed completely in his desire to attain majesty and dignity without the Man of Faith contributing his share. More than that, the author claims that without the cooperation of Adam the Second the civilizational edifice erected by Adam the First would be built on “shifting sands.” “Successful Man wants to be a sovereign, not only in the physical, but also in the spiritual world. He is questing not only for material success but also for ideologico-axiological achievement as well. . . .”⁷ “Since majestic man is in need of a transcendental experience in order to strengthen his cultural edifice, it is the duty of the Man of Faith to provide him with some component parts of this experience.”⁸ It goes without saying that Adam the First creates the whole complex fabric of civilizational existence, of which Adam the Second is a beneficiary. Human life would be too short, beset with dangers and suffering, were we not to enjoy the achievements of Adam the First.

Then, again, it becomes clear, at the end of Rabbi Soloveitchik’s essay, that Adam the First and Adam the Second are no more than typological constructs. In real terms they represent one person, a sort of all-inclusive ideal human personality involved, as it were, in self-confrontation. The

5. Ibid., p. 24.

6. Ibid., p. 44.

7. Ibid., p. 57.

8. Ibid., p. 59.

pronounced universalist tendency present in Rabbi Soloveitchik's essay has never received the attention it deserves. We have seen that ideal humanity was hermeneutically developed, through the fusion of the two types of Adam. It would, indeed, be an unreasonable assumption were we to submit that, in the author's view, the personality of Adam, or, for that matter, the two types of Adam, are to be conceived of as being exclusively Jewish. The more likely conclusion from the fact that the author's philosophic homily centres around Adam (who is not affiliated with any specific religious denomination), is that real humanity is realizable by Man as such, and that this quality of humanity converges with ideal Jewishness.

It goes without saying that the Jewish Man of Faith is nurtured and shaped by Jewish religious sources which form the mainspring of his spirituality. Men of other faiths depend on their own holy books in the spirit of the prophet Micah: "For all people will walk everyone in the name of his God and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." However, from a structural point of view it is the synthesis of the Man of Faith and the man of practical achievement that is of benefit to man himself as well as to society and it represents a valid ideal for all.

Soloveitchik's next essay, originally published in Hebrew and entitled "The Man of Halakhah," aims at the characterization of the halakhic personality and, through it, of Judaism as a whole. Written in poetic Hebrew with lyrical overtones, it is composed — as several writers have already observed — in a vein reminiscent of existentialist philosophy. It endeavours to present the most characteristic features of Judaism by describing a personality, unique and complex by nature, capable of ascending to heights of self-realization and excelling in inner freedom, independence, authenticity and, above all, creativity. These are the main characteristics which Rabbi Soloveitchik attributes, surprisingly, to the man of halakhah. If I am asked why "surprisingly," I would reply that the very term halakhah is associated in our minds with restrictions on human conduct not easily concomitant with freedom, authenticity, and the other qualities which he attributes to the man of halakhah.

How does Soloveitchik arrive at this conclusion and what, in particular, is the meaning of the term "creativity" which, conditioned by the presence of the other attributes, constitutes the highest and most important quality of the man of halakhah? The importance of creativity is both directly stated and indicated by the exposition which is devoted to this concept as compared with the other attributes. To become truly creative, the man of halakhah has first to pass a stage of perception in which he gains knowledge and gathers impressions which help him to embrace the entire scope of his particular discipline. Creativeness is nourished by information gathered from the enormous number and variety of halakhic sources. But more important even than the foregoing is the internalization of the principles in the Kantian sense. The creative stage, following on that of study and cogniscent perception, is ushered in by the attempt to

apply these principles to real life situations. This act of application is likened by the Rabbi to the application of scientific knowledge in everyday life.

In spite of the similarity of the two processes — the halakhic and the scientific — there are, of course, differences, not only in a methodological, but in an essential, sense. These are rooted in the divergent character of the two sets of principles: those of halakhah are transcendental in nature, and are claimed to originate in Divine revelation; those of science are conceived by man, they evolve gradually and, thus, are subject to modification in the light of new experience. Halakhic knowledge, with its imprint of the Divine will, when applied in our lives, contributes to the absorption of eternity in our temporary existence. In other words, this aspect of creativity in the man of halakhah may be metaphorically expressed as causing the Divine presence to descend and inhabit the physical world and, as a result, elevate worldly life to a higher level of spirituality. As Soloveitchik says:

Creativity — this is the descent of transcendence into our turbid, coarse material world, and this descent is brought about by the incorporation of ideal halakhah in the midst of reality.⁹

Further on in his essay he says:

Creativeness is the aim of halakhah and creativity means the realization of eternal halakhah in the temporal and passing world, the “reduction” (*zimzum*) of the honor of the Eternal in the midst of human reality, the descent of the Divine presence to the reality pervading our temporary life.¹⁰

In addition to transposing transcendental principles into the human world, the creativity of the man of halakhah is also expressed by the logical manipulation of these principles so that they can be applied to human conditions. In this way, the man of halakhah contributes to the perfection of the human world. Soloveitchik bases himself on various rabbinic assertions which claim that God did not create a perfect world, but expected man to contribute to its perfection and thus become His partner in the cosmic process. Any activity which helps to civilize the world, to make it more habitable, more amenable to human requirements and, on a spiritual plane, any effort to improve the quality of human institutions and relationships — in short, any performance of the duties which man owes to man and to God, constitutes a realization of this partnership.

To further elucidate the complex nature of the act of creativity attributed to the man of halakhah, he compares him with the religious mystic. The halakhist's creativeness differs from that of the mystic in that it is based on knowledge rather than on religious experience. It is worldly in nature and aimed at the improvement of life on earth. In a metaphorical sense, the direction of the halakhist's activity may be represented as a

9. “*Ish Ha-halakhah*” — *Galuy Ve-nistar* (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1979), p. 91.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

downward movement, whereas the mystic's aspirations lead, as it were, upwards towards the Deity and the world of pure spirit. In the Rabbi's words:

Whereas secret wisdom (*Kabbalah*) heals the imperfections of the created world by endeavouring to lift it upwards towards the source of pure and perfect Being, the halakhah fulfils the same task by causing the *Shekhinah* (Divine presence) to descend to the human world by the concentration — as it were — of transcendence in the midst of our imperfect world.¹¹

In using the Kabbalistic phrase “concentration of transcendence,” Soloveitchik no doubt wishes to convey the idea that a life permeated by the principles of halakhah invites, as it were, the Divine presence to descend and dwell in our midst.

To avoid possible misunderstanding, it should be stated that the term “man of halakhah” does not refer exclusively to the rabbinical scholar, but, in a wider sense, also to any Jew who lives by the principles of halakhah. It is only natural for the acting halakhic scholar to become involved in worldly matters, from examining kashrut arrangements of diverse kinds (even involving blood-stained fingers in examining the lungs of a slaughtered animal) to intervening in marital disputes and dealing with problems arising from the heterogeneous facets of present day society. He cannot keep aloof from its more unpleasant manifestations but, on the contrary, must be prepared to become involved in them should the need arise. One cannot help being puzzled by the contrast between the worldly nature of the halakhic scholar's activities on one hand, and the spiritual aspects of its effects and implications, i.e., inviting the *Shekhinah* to dwell in our midst, for this, according to Soloveitchik, is precisely the highest goal of the man of halakhah.

The ideal of the man of halakhah is to cause the *Shekhinah* to dwell here in our worldly lives — “and there I will meet with thee and speak with thee” (Exodus, 25: 22). This verse represents the highest goal of halakhah.¹²

Apart from becoming involved in human relationships and a host of other every-day matters, the ideal man of halakhah is a studious observer of nature in the widest sense. In the essay reviewed here there is a long and poetic description of the marvels of nature perceived by the man of halakhah, as well as his reactions and responses to them. What engages his mind are, above all, the seasonal changes and transformations which exercise a profound influence on the life of the observant Jew. Dusk and dawn, sunrise and sunset, weekday and the Sabbath, the new moon, festivals and fasts — all of these reflect the flow of time and the changes occurring in nature. These, in turn, have a bearing on a host of halakhic observances which shape the character of Jewish life.

11. Ibid., p. 90.

12. Ibid., p. 53.

The highest phase of the halakhist's creativity is attained by him through the process of self-transformation or *Teshuvah*, "return" or "penitence," a subject on which the Rabbi has held many oral discourses which were later published.¹³

One of the dimensions of creativity attributed to the halakhist is the transformation of chaos into Cosmos, as far as the external world is concerned. The process of building up one's personality, in short, self-education, is viewed in a similar way. It is the attempt to transform the inner chaos in man into cosmos in relation to a framework of moral principles. "The highest principle to be adopted by us is the attempt to re-create ourselves. It is Judaism that brought this idea into the world."¹⁴

The man of halakhah is further characterized in the essay under discussion by the independence of mind which colours his religious activities — paradoxical as this may sound, in view of the many "thou shalt nots" of halakhah. According to Soloveitchik, the man of halakhah is not dependent on mystical experience or any other kind of supranatural inspiration, but he relies solely on his halakhic scholarship, i.e., the logical manipulation of principles derived from relevant codices and their application to everyday life. This independence is given great prominence and the man of halakhah is lauded precisely because of this attribute:

The man of halakhah is a ruler in the kingdom of reason and spirit. There is nothing that stands in his way: everything is subject to his arbitration and obeys his judgments. Even the Holy One, blessed be His name, bestows his seal of approval on the halakhist's arbitrations and grants him the imprint of His authority in matters of Torah observance; the Creator of the Universe as it were accepts man's halakhic decisions and rulings as valid.¹⁵

The authority and standing of the man of halakhah surpasses that of intellectuals in scientific and other secular fields.

The man of halakhah wields the highest authority and is admired by everyone . . . no other branch of knowledge has ever crowned its masters in a way comparable to that of halakhah. In no other intellectual pursuit has the scholar been so highly extolled as the master of halakhah. The glorification of man here reaches its apotheosis.¹⁶

These words of praise for the man of halakhah, which may sound somewhat exaggerated to the secular-minded, are meant to characterize the ideal *Ish Ha-halakhah par excellence*. It goes without saying that here and there a rabbi falls short of this ideal. Soloveitchik is quite aware of this discrepancy, warning the reader in a footnote at the beginning of the essay:

the characterization of the man of halakhah refers to the pure ideal type, like other ideal types dealt with in the human sciences. The real men of hala-

13. "*Al Hateshuvah*," collected and edited by Pinhas H. Peli, (Torah Education Dept. of the W.Z.O., 1974).

14. "*Ish Ha-halakhah*," p. 14.

15. Ibid., p. 72.

16. Ibid., p. 73.

khah who are not simple but rather complex types, approximate to the ideal type to a higher or lesser degree as the case may be, dependent on the intellectual and spiritual level of their personalities.¹⁷

Spontaneity and authenticity are further characteristics of the ideal man of halakhah and both are prerequisites to creativity. Generally speaking, these are the characteristics of persons who hold views and beliefs of their own and are not easily persuaded to give them up in favour of ideas in vogue at any time. Authenticity, in particular, marks the highly developed personality, which is in contrast to "the man of the species," (*ish ha-min*) whose character bears the imprint of generality and tends to uncritical acceptance of the prevailing mores of society.

In sum, the man of halakhah is a highly individualized person, independent, authentic, inner-directed, deriving spiritual orientation from the sources of Judaism which he absorbs and integrates into his being. By contrast, the "man of the species"

does not possess anything that might form the core of his existence as a singular individual and might sustain and legitimize his personality. His roots are anchored in mediocrity . . . he lacks stature and a profile of his own. He lacks originality and creativity and never brings out anything new. In short, he is receptive and passive, entirely dependent on the ideas and opinions of others.¹⁸

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that this very distinction that the learned Rabbi makes between the man of halakhah on the one hand and the common man on the other, reflects the approach of an intellectual aristocrat, which is somewhat surprising in a man of religion, who is expected to regard all his fellow human beings as children of God, equally deserving of tolerance and love. The Rabbi's emphasis on creativity, independence and authenticity, and his distinction between the two categories of man are reminiscent of certain trends in existentialist philosophy, in particular of the Heideggerian brand. It was Heidegger who differentiated so clearly between the authentic man and the "fallen" undistinguished commonplace one.¹⁹

In discussing creativity as the aim of halakhah, Soloveitchik uses ideas borrowed from Maimonides, yet their formulation is reminiscent of the language of modern philosophers and psychologists. Of his several attempts to sum up the meaning of creativeness I quote the following:

17. Ibid., p. 11.

18. Ibid., p. 105.

19. It is interesting to note that the same distinction, but with different variations, has been adopted by a number of philosophers and social scientists. I recall William Whyte's "organization man," largely shaped by the industrial establishment, Herbert Marcuse's "one-dimensional man," devoid of originality and spontaneity, influenced to an alarming extent by the communication media, or the outer-directed man of David Riesman (*The Lonely Crowd*), who is activated by the conventions accepted by his environment, rather than deriving orientation from inner feelings and convictions.

The secret of creativeness rests in the union of receptive and active intelligence. Receptive intelligence is merely passive, serving, as it were, as material upon which the active intelligence imposes a shape. At first, man is receptive though potentially endowed with active intelligence, and creativity means spontaneity, activeness, originality, innovation, initiative and daring. Hence, man should become an active and stimulating person. His potential should evolve into actuality, receptiveness into spontaneity. In the creative process, formless and inactive matter is made alive and brought into action. The concept of personal deeds and actions plays an important role in Judaism and this idea forms the concept of creativeness in the thought of Maimonides.²⁰

It is no mere coincidence that the identical qualities — creativity, spontaneity, activeness, originality, authenticity — are regarded as values of central importance both in secular Western philosophical and in educational thought. In spite of the plurality of trends in Western philosophy there seems to be general agreement about the positive character of these values. I do not think that halakhah and, in a wider sense, Judaism in toto, have ever been characterized in similar terms by other Jewish traditionalist philosophers. This would appear to be a rather novel and original trend in the Rabbi's philosophy, its purport being — either deliberately or possibly unconsciously — to convey to the modern Jew that the very same values that underlie secular Western thought are, from a purely structural viewpoint, inherent in fundamental Jewish philosophy and hence not alien to the Jew. "The highest moral and religious perfection which Judaism strives to attain is personified in the creative person."²¹ These are striking words and rather surprising when used in the context of a theological essay.

Moreover, religious creativity, as distinct from that of a secular artistic nature, contains a dimension absent from the corresponding secular sphere. The idea of human partnership in Divine creation and of endowing worldly life with the attribute of holiness is, of course, entirely specific to religious thought. However, from a purely structural point of view, as distinct from specific content, the ideals of Judaism, far from being opposed to those of Western philosophy, are parallel to it. This creates a link between the two cultures and bears witness to a pronounced universalist tendency, somewhat rare in traditional Jewish philosophy. It may be recalled that Orthodox Jewish thought views Judaism and secular culture as separate and conflicting entities. Though in his weekly Havdalah service Rabbi Soloveitchik pronounces with the sincerity of inner conviction the words "who makest the distinction between the holy and the profane, between light and darkness, between Israel and the gentiles," nevertheless, his writings reveal a bold universalist tendency which requires further elucidation and comment.

20. "*Ish Ha-halakhah*," p. 107.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

In a lecture in English on "The Synagogue as an Institution and Idea,"²² Soloveitchik describes, in existential terms, the predicament of man who feels himself to be "a creature of low stature," lonely, insecure, insignificant, nowhere at home, frightened, intimidated. He quotes a passage from the Song of Songs, referring to King Solomon, whom he sees as such a man: "Behold his bed, which is Solomon's, threescore valiant men are round about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being experts in war; every man has his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night." He interprets the phrase "fear in the night" as characterizing the creaturely existential fear of King Solomon whom he sees as symbolically representing modern man — enlightened and mighty, rich in achievement, master of the arts and sciences — whose technological skills have made it possible for him to reach out to the stars. Yet modern man, too, is beset by that basic malaise of "fear in the night." Now it is the purpose of prayer to relieve man of this existential dread and bestow upon him a feeling of "at-homeness" and security, in the spirit of "The Lord is with me and I shall not fear."

Prayer is without doubt motivated by existential dread. This is a fundamental tenet common to all existentialist theology, including the Christian, although it may occasion some discomfort to Rabbi Soloveitchik to find himself so close to the theological tenets of other denominations. Here is a passage of striking similarity to Rabbi Soloveitchik's lecture on the synagogue: John Macquarrie deals with Heidegger's philosophy which, though not religiously orientated, brings us, he holds, to the threshold of religion. On the phenomenon of anxiety Macquarrie has this to say: "For what is this anxiety or dread, this basic malaise, this uneasy restlessness, this feeling of not being at home in the world, this disclosure which shatters the illusory contentment and insecurity of everyday existence, but the "cor inquietum of Christian experience"²³ which leads man to God.

To come back to Rabbi Soloveitchik: not only does he interpret the idea of the synagogue in a universalist spirit, i.e., as flowing from the existentialist needs of man, but even the idea of exile, hitherto thought of as specifically a part of the fate of the Jewish people, is widened by him and applied to the whole of mankind who, too, feel as if they were in exile, homeless and estranged from their surroundings. From an existentialist point of view, argues the Rabbi, the idea of Galut is universal in character, the Jewish exile being merely a reflection of a more general exilic feeling which is part of the human condition. Since man was driven out of Eden this curse of homelessness has rested upon him.

In endeavouring to bring out the universal aspect of Rabbi Soloveitchik's theological thought I am well aware that he advocates a proud and

22. Translated into the Hebrew as "*Beit HaKnesset Mossad Verayon*" in *Divrei Hagut Beh'arakha* (World Zionist Organization, 1981), pp. 99-116.

23. John Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 68.

independent stance for Judaism vis-à-vis Christianity and other monotheistic religions, free from fraternisation in a superficially ecumenical spirit. The Rabbi's essay, "Confrontations" (*Tradition*, Vol. 6, No. 2, [1964].) will dispel any doubt that may exist on this point. While aware of the danger of oversimplification, I believe that the following quotation from this essay represents a true reflection of his views on the relation of Judaism to Christianity in the practical field of community relations and the co-operation possible within this framework:

The relationship between two communities must be outer-directed and related to the secular orders with which men of faith come face to face. In the secular sphere, we may discuss positions to be taken, ideas to be evolved, and plans to be formulated. In these matters, religious communities may together recommend action to be developed and may seize the initiative to be implemented later by general society. However, our joint engagement in this kind of enterprise must not dull our sense of identity as a faith community. We must always remember that our singular commitment to God and our hope and indomitable will for survival are non-negotiable and non-rationalizable and are not subject to debate and argumentation.

This proud and independent stance of Judaism, as portrayed by Rabbi Soloveitchik, need not divert our attention from the fact that his theological thought, because of its existentialist foundations and undercurrents, reveals clear universalist tendencies. I hope I have shown that they are manifested in his conception of the good life (symbolized by the fusion of the attributes of the two Adams) as well as the educational ideal (stress on creativity, authenticity, inner freedom, etc.) These ideals are, structurally speaking, common to all mankind.

Finally, the concept of prayer as flowing from the condition of man and the exilic character which is shared, although differently, by Jew and non-Jew, all spell out, I hope convincingly, the universalist undercurrent of his thought. It may be that Rabbi Soloveitchik's proud insistence on the singularity and otherness of Judaism, as manifested in "Confrontations," flows in a dialectical sense from his clear vision of the framework of ideas and beliefs common to all mankind.

This accentuation of the universalist trend in Rabbi Soloveitchik's thought is of significant value in view of the fact that this trend's influence is receding in present day traditional Judaism and, *a fortiori*, in Israel, where the nationalistic strain is steadily gaining ground.

It goes without saying that a strong universalist impulse is inherent in the very fabric of Hebrew prophecy, and it also finds appropriate expression in rabbinic thought. Many sayings in the various branches of rabbinic literature bear this out and I should like to quote one example which seems to be particularly relevant and pertinent: I am thinking of the well-known controversy between Rabbi Akiva and Ben Azzai as to what is to be regarded as the main principle (*Klal Gadol*) of Judaism. According to Rabbi Akiva it is "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," which, in rabbinic tradition, refers to *Ahikha be-Mizvot* i.e., to your co-religionist.

According to Ben Azzai, however, it is contained in the following verse: "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God he made him." According to Ben Azzai this principle is more universal, more "exalted" (*nisgav*) as the well-known commentator Rabbi Meir Loeb ben Yechiel Michael (the *Malbin*) says in his commentary: "Because all human beings are linked to one another in one body. All were created in the image of God, so as to present in wholeness and perfection the image of God who bears within Himself the souls of all human beings. Thus all man-kind form one entity and are like one body composed of various limbs."

It is only natural that this controversy between Rabbi Akiva and Ben Azzai was continued in different forms by later Jewish philosophers. To quote a few examples: Maimonides represents the universal trend, Yehuda Halevi the national one. Closer to our times it was Moses Mendelssohn and Samson Raphael Hirsch who represent the universal trend, whereas the school of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hacoen Kook supports the nationalistic one.

We can only be grateful for the literary work of Rabbi Soloveitchik because it contributes to the reinforcement of the universalist trend, thus helping to restore the balance between the two.

The Case for Count Clermont – Tonnerre

JAKOB J. PETUCHOWSKI

WHEN, IN DECEMBER 1789, THE FRENCH National Assembly discussed the possibility of emancipating the Jews of France, Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre (1757–1792) suggested that the “Jews should be denied everything as a nation, but granted everything as individuals.”¹

Clermont-Tonnerre’s proposal has been the subject of a great deal of Jewish criticism — but only about two hundred years later. A generation of Jews which witnessed both the destruction of European Jewry and the creation of the State of Israel, and which, as a reaction to both events, has elevated something called “Jewish ethnicity” to a position of priority in the definition of Jewish identity, has had severe doubts as to the good faith of the eighteenth-century French nobleman.

But Clermont-Tonnerre’s proposal did not look negative at all to the Western Jews of his own time and of some generations thereafter. They accepted it with alacrity. Reform Judaism, itself the offspring of the state of affairs envisaged by the Count, clothed the new condition of Western Jewry in a theological garb, and proclaimed, both in Europe and in the United States, that the national phase of Jewish existence was strictly a matter of the past, and that no future restoration of that past historical phase was at all desired.

Even Western Orthodoxy, of the kind fashioned by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888), encouraged full participation of the Jews in the civic and cultural life of the countries of which they had become citizens. For Hirsch, too, the ancient Hebrew commonwealth was but a past phase in God’s education of His Chosen People, a means to an end, and not an end in itself. Hirsch, too, just like the Reformers, taught the doctrine of the “Mission of Israel,” a mission which necessitated the Jewish presence in the four corners of the earth. Unlike the Reformers, however, Hirsch also insisted that the carrying out of that mission entailed the performance of biblical and Rabbinical ceremonial and ritual duties, because those duties were revealed by God Himself. Of course, being bound by biblical prophecies and Rabbinic doctrine, Hirsch, again unlike the Reformers, could not deny that, when the Messiah comes, there will be an “Ingathering of the Exiles” into a messianic Jewish state. But that was strictly a matter to be taken care of by God and His Messiah. Until

1. Cf. Emmanuel Be’eri, “Clermont-Tonnerre, Count Stanislas de,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 5, cols. 605–606.

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Messiah's coming, Hirsch was quite content to live with Clermont-Tonnerre's formula; and he and his followers frowned upon any human efforts to interfere with the divine time-table.

We have referred to the Jews in the West. Clermont-Tonnerre's formula had applicability only to France, to the countries to which the banner of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" was carried by Napoleon's victorious armies, and to those other countries, like England and the United States, which, with the growth of the democratic ideal, had their own reasons for granting equal rights to their Jewish citizens. The Jews of Eastern Europe were really never offered Emancipation on Clermont-Tonnerre's or anybody else's terms. That is why, as late as the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919, they could appear as claimants for ethnic minority rights in Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Yet even among the Jews of the East there were those like the Hebrew poet Judah Leib Gordon (1831–1892) who, quite in the spirit of Clermont-Tonnerre, suggested: "Be a Jew at home, and a human being outside!"² He must have thought that, by fully participating in the cultural life of his environment, the Jew in Czarist Russia would "deserve" being granted the kind of Emancipation which Western Jews enjoyed on Clermont-Tonnerre's terms.

The phrase, "Jews should be denied everything as a nation," has a far more ominous ring in modern Jewish ears than it had in the ears of the Jews most immediately affected by that formula. In order to promote the integration of the French (and Italian) Jews into the general life of their country, Napoleon, in 1807, called together his famous "*Grand Sanhédrin*," where the Jewish rabbinical and lay notables were asked to ratify on behalf of the Jewish side the concrete implications of "Jews should be denied everything as a nation, but granted everything as individuals." Happily, we do not have to venture a guess at what those Jewish notables must have "bartered away," to use the phrase of their latter-day critics. The decisions of the "*grand Sanhédrin*" have been preserved in print: *Décisions doctrinales du Grand Sanhédrin* (Paris, 1812).³

The French *Sanhédrin* declared polygamy to be illegal. It made the granting of a *get* (Jewish religious divorce) dependent upon an antecedent civil divorce, and it made Jewish marriage rites dependent upon a compliance with the civil marriage law. It obligated the Jews of France and Italy to treat their non-Jewish fellow-citizens as brothers, and declared biblical morality to be binding in the Jews' relations with non-Jews. It affirmed the Jews' obligation to serve in the army when called upon to do so, and it encouraged the Jews to enter the free professions, and to engage in manual labor and agriculture. It also prohibited the taking of exorbitant interest from Jew and non-Jew alike.

2. Cf. Simon Halkin, *Modern Hebrew Literature* (New York: Schocken, 1950), p. 57.

3. This contains the text of the decisions in French and in Hebrew. An English translation, by F.D. Kirwan, of Diogene Tama's edition of the entire *Transactions of the Parisian Sanhedrim* (sic) was published in London, in 1807, and was reprinted in *Historical Views of Judaism* (New York: Arno Press), 1973.

In short, the French *Sanhédrin* was called upon to do nothing more than affirm the ancient talmudic principle of *dina demalkhutha dina*, that the civil law of the country in which Jews reside is religiously binding upon them.⁴ The decisions of the *Sanhédrin*, if followed, would prevent the Jews from being “a state within a state,” and from dealing with matters of civil law in a manner contrary to the provisions of French civil law. This, by the way, according to his own testimony, is all that Clermont-Tonnerre himself had meant when he wanted to deny the Jews “everything as a nation.”⁵

Even the most enthusiastic supporter of modern “Jewish nationalism” in the West, as long as he or she does not emigrate to the State of Israel, has long since consciously or unconsciously, accepted the decisions of Napoleon’s *Sanhédrin*. And in the State of Israel, the recognition of *Jewish Law* as the law of the state in some matters affecting personal status has already had Conservative and Reform Jews in an uproar. Even the most Orthodox Jew in the West has long since learned to withhold the religious blessings of a marriage, or the religious recognition of its termination, until the requirements of the secular civil law have been met. (Reform and Conservative rabbis have learned to do likewise in the State of Israel, where the “secular civil law” in those matters happens to be the medieval code of the *Shulhan ‘Arukh*. To the extent to which they chafe under those provisions, they would seem to prefer the way in which such matters are handled in the West, i.e., the heritage of Clermont-Tonnerre and the French *Sanhédrin*.)

The *Grand Sanhédrin*, and therefore, by implication, Napoleon and the French government, had nothing to say about the way in which Jews should worship, about the manner in which they were to impart religious instruction to their children, about how they were to celebrate their festivals, collect and distribute their charity, and write or read their books. That is to say, apart from making the Jews equal under the law, in terms of both rights and obligations, the officially adopted formula of Clermont-Tonnerre did not interfere in the slightest way with the ongoing business of Jewish living.

The French Jews did *not* give up cultural creativity and intellectual growth, which they deemed to be related to their *religious* heritage, and not to any putative “nationhood.” In fact, the kind of Jewish scholarship which flourished in emancipated French Jewry, represented by such figures as the Munks, the Kahns, the Reinachs and the Dérenbourgs, contrasted very favorably with anything that pre-Emancipation French Jewry had produced since the days of the medieval Bible commentators and the Talmud glossators, called the *Tosaphists*. And what goes for emancipated French Jewry, goes in certainly no lesser degree for the Jews of Germany, once they, too, had benefited from Emancipation.

4. B. *Nedarim* 28a; b. *Gittin* 10b; b. *Baba Qamma* 113a; b. *Baba Bathra* 54b. Cf. Leo Landmann, *Jewish Law in the Diaspora* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College, 1968).

5. See the section of Clermont-Tonnerre’s speech, quoted in H.H. Ben-Sasson, ed., *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 744.

Nor did emancipated French Jewry's renunciation of a separate Jewish "nationhood" imply that French Jews would henceforth be unmindful of their responsibility towards coreligionists in other parts of the world. Quite the contrary! The *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, founded in 1860, was the very first modern Jewish international organization, dedicated to the welfare of the Jews and to the defense of Jewish rights wherever they might be endangered. Interestingly enough, the *Alliance* also supported colonization and educational projects in Palestine. The German Jewish *Hilfsverein* and the American Jewish Committee, coming into existence at a somewhat later time, could already partially model themselves on the *Alliance*. All of this became possible only *after* Emancipation.

If, in the course of time, many Jews in the West jettisoned the jargon of the Ghetto, and learned to speak the languages of their countries flawlessly, they did so of their own volition. If they allocated less time in their schools to Judaic studies than had been the case before, it was in order to equip their children with the knowledge and the skills necessary for life in the modern world, and not because any government compelled them to deprive their offspring of talmudic lore. (And how much Talmud does the graduate of a non-Orthodox Israeli high school know today?) If some radical Reform Jewish thinkers like Samuel Holdheim (1806–1860) wanted to see the disappearance of even the last vestiges of Jewish Law,⁶ then some of his Orthodox contemporaries managed to maintain components even of traditional Jewish *civil* law on a strictly voluntarist basis; and, as late as the first third of the twentieth century, it was not unusual for Jewish cattle dealers in the South of Germany to bring their cases of disagreements in business before a rabbi for a *din torah* (adjudication in accordance with traditional Jewish Law).

Jewish life under Emancipation conditions facilitated the rise of Reform, Conservative and Modern Orthodox Judaism. It made possible the flourishing of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (the scientific study of Judaism) and the establishment and functioning of modern rabbinical seminaries serving the needs of the various religious orientations. It saw the growth of a variegated Jewish press, artistic creations, contributions to literature and the physical sciences, and the working out of a number of highly sophisticated theologies and philosophies of Judaism. It did all of that without any infusion, at first, of Zionist ideology, and in spite of the fact that Jewish "nationhood" was supposedly "bartered away" for the benefits of an Emancipation which had been offered to, and accepted by, the Jews of the West on the terms formulated by Count Clermont-Tonnerre.

Obviously, therefore, "nationhood" must have meant to the Count nothing more than a legal system in conflict with the legal system of the state — as, for example, when Rabbinic Law, before it was modified for

6. Cf. Samuel Holdheim, *Über die Autonomie der Rabbinen* (Schwerin, 1843).

Ashkenazi Jewry in the Middle Ages, permitted polygamy, while the French Civil Code did not; or when biblical and Rabbinic Law permitted the taking of interest from non-Jews and prohibited the taking of interest from Jews, while French Law would tolerate no such distinctions. But, once such matters had been taken care of, Clermont-Tonnerre's demands were exhausted. They did not extend into the cultural and the philanthropic realms, for, in the case of Emancipation Jewry, unlike that of modern Jewish "nationalist" ideologues, those realms were functions of the *religious* heritage, not of "nationhood."

When, therefore, the rabbinical leaders of American Reform Judaism, in 1885, declared in their "Pittsburgh Platform": "We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community," they almost uttered a truism. They certainly gave expression to a formulation of Jewish identity which, by that time, was in the Western world no longer confined to Jews who were also able to accept all the other "planks" of that rather radical Reform Jewish "platform."

That, of course, is no longer the way in which both Emancipation and Clermont-Tonnerre are being viewed by many Jews today. Even if there is little factual basis in the realities of Emancipation Jewry's cultural, religious and philanthropic life for an attack on Clermont-Tonnerre's formula, the record of France and, later on, of Germany in the matter of anti-Semitism in the post-Emancipation era would seem to provide heavy ammunition for Jews who seek to discredit those who offered, as well as those who accepted, Emancipation on Clermont-Tonnerre's terms. After all, it was in France herself, a century after Emancipation, that the Dreyfus Affair was enacted. Not only was a Jewish army officer falsely accused of treason, a charge instigated by monarchist and clericalist circles, but the French population as a whole let itself be whipped into an anti-Semitic frenzy. It was enough to make the Viennese journalist, Theodor Herzl, despair of Emancipation; and he sat down to pen his leaflet, *The Jewish State*, in 1896. Herzl proposed a "national" solution of "the Jewish Problem." Emancipation, quite obviously, did not work even in the very France which had all but invented it!

And if Emancipation did not work in France, as evidenced by the Dreyfus Affair, then how much more telling was the discrediting of Emancipation between 1933 and 1945 in that other great example of a country in which the "emancipated Jewish life" had flourished, Germany! Clearly, the faith which Western Jewry had placed in Emancipation had been an illusion. Clermont-Tonnerre and his successors had not been honest bargaining partners; and the Western Jews' renunciation of Jewish "nationhood" had been an act of unrequited love.

That kind of reaction is understandable — not only in the light of the destruction of European Jewry, but also, and particularly, in view of the fact that Theodor Herzl's proposal of a "national solution," to which he

had been driven by the Dreyfus Affair, has, since 1948, been given concrete form in the shape of the State of Israel. Israeli and Zionist evaluations of Emancipation and its effects upon Jewish life in the West tend, on the whole, to be about as accurate and fair as are the New Testament evaluations of the Pharisees. In both instances, we are dealing with a competitor's caricature of the competition.

A more dispassionate examination of the evidence in hand might lead to the admission of the fact that Herzl's "solution" has not as yet "solved" anything, but is still in the experimental stage. It might also lead to the recognition that, notwithstanding the disappointment caused by the Dreyfus Affair in France and the temporary victory of inhumanity in National Socialist Germany, Emancipation has actually worked in any number of other countries, of which the United States of America is certainly not the least.

The truth of the matter is that both the emancipated Jew as a citizen of a Western democracy and the "national" Jew as a citizen of the State of Israel are relatively new phenomena, when seen against the background of Jewish history. Both of them, in their respective endeavors to demonstrate their Jewish authenticity, can quote past Jewish experience only selectively. One is no more "authentic" than the other. The affirmation of a Jewish future in the State of Israel, and the affirmation of a Jewish future under Emancipation conditions in the West are both acts of faith, proclamations of hope, with little by way of irrefutable "proof" to sustain them. *Both* forms of modern Jewish existence, moreover, may yet have their distinctive roles to play in the process of Jewish survival.

The setbacks suffered by emancipated Jewry in nineteenth-century France and in twentieth-century Germany are, after all, no more decisive evidence against the possibility of an ultimate realization of the Emancipation ideal than are the three destructions of Israelite and Jewish states in the Land of Israel — in 722 B.C.E., 586 B.C.E., and 70 C.E. — against the hopes which so many Jews today cherish for the State of Israel. This being the case, those Jews who have opted for a future in the Diaspora, and who flourish in the Diaspora even now, will, upon further reflection, come to the conclusion that a case can be made for Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre, after all.

Creative Assimilation and its Benefits

REBECCA SCHERER

A NOTABLE CHARACTERISTIC OF JUDAISM, in evidence at least since the Israelite entry into the Land of Canaan, has been a tension between our ideas, our culture, and the other culture or cultures around us, a situation which ultimately shapes into a pattern of attraction-rejection. The attraction has been regarded as a back-sliding or regression, as unqualified "assimilation." However, there are actually two possible assimilatory processes, the crucial difference between them being a matter of balance and direction.

The results of what one may term negative assimilation, absorption of the dominant society's socio-cultural patterns and values to the point where Jewish identity is minimal or disappears altogether, are obvious. In the process that one may call positive assimilation, Judaism is doing the assimilating, despite a certain amount of adaptation to the non-Jewish culture. The latter, providing new concepts and models which Jewish culture borrows and adapts to its core ideas, serves as a vehicle for the continued vitality of Judaism.

There are few facets of Jewish culture that are not the result of this synthesis. One can choose at random any number of minor examples: the thirteenth century Isaac Ibn Sahula's *M'shal ha-Kadmoni*, a collection of humorous animal fables with delightful illustrations; the witty, convoluted Hebrew-Italian poetry of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries; or medieval illustrated Haggadahs. More important, however, are encounters with other cultures which have significantly shaped or permanently altered the form and/or thought of Judaism, such as those with the Egyptians and Canaanites, with Hellenism, with the Moslem Arab world and with the peasant traditions and dissident religious sects of Christian eastern Europe.

The monumental achievement of Moses is not lessened in any way by the realization that it did not take place in a vacuum. It is likely that Moses, whose name is Egyptian, as are the names of his relatives, Phinehas, Hophni and Merari, grew to adulthood in a cosmopolitan, multilingual Egyptian society (he would have been fluent in Egyptian, Canaanite and Hebrew, a dialectical variant of Canaanite) at the time when the god Amun-Re was exalted in hymns as the father of all other gods, the maker of heaven and earth, creator of mankind. The Aten heresy had collapsed in northern Egypt. This heresy was exclusively monotheistic (like the God of Israel in Exodus 20:3, Aten is the god "beside whom there is none other"); the emphasis on the "teaching" parallels the position of Torah in

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Israel; and there is constant emphasis on the one god as creator of everything (Aten, like the God of Israel, is the god "who creates what comes into existence").¹

The Mosaic laws, too, exist within a cultural context. In recent decades archaeology has provided evidence that the Book of the Covenant, in Exodus 21-23, may be part of a much longer Hebrew analogue to the Code of Hammurabi, the Assyrian and Hittite legal codes and similar legislation, all belonging to the period between 2000 and 1100 B.C.E. Although it is far removed from Canaanite jurisprudence in either spirit or details, the Book of the Covenant shows evidence of strong Canaanite influence on its general formulation and legal terminology.²

The Israelites seem to have adopted the Canaanites' sacrificial practice and ritual as well as their highly developed psalmody. The Temple of Solomon was built by a Canaanite architect from Tyre after Phoenician models, just as synagogues would be modeled on temples and later on churches. Archaeologists have determined that the pillars of Jachin and Boaz, the Sea, the portable lavers and great altar, the decoration of walls and objects with figures of winged sphinxes, or cherubim, lions, bulls, palmettes and lilies, etc. are all of contemporary Canaanite inspiration. The representation of the God of Israel as an invisible deity enthroned above the two cherubim was derived from Canaanite iconography, which depicts kings and gods sitting on thrones supported by cherubim.³

Important to the development of the Bible is the literary prototype — form, motif and imagery — which scholars believe that Canaanite literature provided for the psalmists and prophets of Israel.⁴ *El*, "the powerful one," *Elyon* or *Eli*, "the exalted one," were common appellations of Baal; where the Canaanites had sometimes used the plural of *el* to indicate "totality of the gods," the Israelites used *elohim* to stress the unity and universality of God. The fifteenth-fourteenth century B.C.E. literature discovered in the 1920s at Ugarit (modern Ras Shamra), which is in a language closely resembling Biblical Hebrew but antedating the earliest written formulations of any part of the Bible, contains epithets, phrases and even descriptions in connection with the gods of Canaan similar to, and sometimes identical with, those applied by the Hebrew poets to the God of Israel.⁵

A revival of Canaanite literature about the seventh century B.C.E. had an even more pronounced impact on Hebrew works composed between the seventh and third centuries.⁶ A profusion of allusions to Canaanite (Phoenician) literature can be found in Job, Proverbs, Isaiah

1. William Foxwell Albright, "The Biblical Period," in *The Jews: Their History, Culture and Religion*, edited by Louis Finkelstein (New York: Harper, 1960), v. 1, pp. 8-9.

2. William Foxwell Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity; Monotheism and the Historical Process* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), pp. 267-268.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

4. John Gray, *The Canaanites* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), pp. 159-160.

5. Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Mind* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), pp. 51-52.

6. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, p. 243.

(the exilic sections and Second Isaiah), Ezekiel, Habakkuk, the Song of Songs, Koheleth, Jubilees and parts of Daniel, all of which are believed to have been written after the Dispersion of 586 B.C.E. and thus influenced by the new ideas to which the Jewish exiles were exposed in Babylonia.

Babylonian scientific findings on the regularity and movement of the heavenly bodies threatened to undermine Jewish belief in the omnipotence of the God of Israel, but the writer who came to be known as Second Isaiah took the bold step of recognizing the validity of this new knowledge and using it to strengthen Jewish faith by pointing out that the scientific findings were but evidence of God's reality and greatness. In taking this step forward, however, he carefully neutralized opposition by characterizing it as a glance backward, a link with tradition: "Hath it not been told to you from the beginning," a tactic that was to be repeated by Jewish innovators in other times and places.

One of the most notable examples is Greek influence on the Talmud. The advent of Greek speculative thought was a watershed in the intellectual history of the West and the Near East. Mythic cosmogonies gave way to systems of progressive and cumulative increase of knowledge, and mythopoeic thinking in general was replaced by critical judgment.

The rise of the Sadducees and Pharisees was a direct result of the Jewish-Greek encounter, the dispute between the two parties reflecting different responses to it. These responses illustrate clearly the difference between negative and positive assimilation. Those who succumbed to Hellenism belonged largely to the "fundamentalist," patrician Sadducee group. The Pharisees, while rejecting the superficial manifestations of Hellenism, applied Greek ways of thinking to the Bible, and the Pharisaic influence on the course of Judaism was decisive.

It has been suggested that the Pharisees' stress on universal instruction as basic to Judaism had its origin in the Greek concept of *paideia*, perfection through liberal education,⁷ although casual references to reading in the Bible provide evidence of widespread literacy among Jews prior to the advent of Hellenism in the Near East.

There is, nevertheless, a noticeable change of focus from earlier periods, when study of the Torah, though important, was still not considered the principal means of serving God. The Pharisees laid major emphasis on study of the Law and the formation of schools of disciples. Leading up to this stress on systematic study was the creation of a new class, the scribes, whose duty it was to interpret Jewish law to their Greek masters. The extensive knowledge of these non-priestly authorities on the Law soon gained them special standing in the Jewish community.⁸

Some scholars maintain that Pharisaic insistence on the need to extend the operation of the Law to suit new conditions and to cover all

7. Elias J. Bickerman, "The Historical Foundations of Postbiblical Judaism," in Finkelstein, *Op. cit.*, v. 1, p. 109.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

possible eventualities was entirely Hellenistic,⁹ that the Talmud was the result of an effort to apply “reason” to life through the interpretation of Scripture or, where the latter is silent, by the application of principles considered to be derived from it.¹⁰ The idea of paralleling the written law by traditional usage, or *halakhah*, reflects the Greek concept of the unwritten law (*agraphos nomos*), but where the Greek oral law often served to negate the written law, Pharisaism used it to “make a fence for the Torah.”¹¹

Perhaps the most telling example of the Hellenistic framework of Pharisaic thought is found in the oldest exegetical and hermeneutic rules employed by the Pharisees, the prototypes of which may be found in Greek rhetoric. Seven of these rules are attributed to Hillel, although they were probably in use earlier.¹² Although Rabbinic literature contains no Greek philosophic terminology, it is replete with Greek words, including legal terms (and Latin ones, which came by way of the Greek). An example is the *prozbul* (the term being a contraction of the Greek *pros boulé*, “before the council”), a legal fiction which, while leaving unaltered the Biblical law concerning the sabbatical cancellation of debts, permitted the court, instead of the individual lender, to reclaim the loan.

The Greek language penetrated deeply into all classes of Jewish society. The Rabbis, in their sermons, often took whole sentences from Greek proverbs current among the people, from Greek legal documents and literature, to elucidate Biblical events. There is considerable evidence, according to Saul Lieberman,¹³ that all Greek phrases in Rabbinic literature are actually quotations.

Jewish philosophy began in the Hellenistic Jewish community of the second century B.C.E. The Alexandrian Philo Judaeus was fully conversant with Platonic and Stoic ideas. Clearly grasping the essential points of contact between Jewish and Greek thought, he created a metaphysical system which combined important elements of the two traditions, thus paving the way for Neoplatonism. His transformation of Platonic philosophy allowed later Jewish (and Christian) philosophers to view “Platonic” doctrines as consonant with Scripture, and to interpret Biblical passages in a “Platonic” sense. Recent scholarship has shown Philo’s influence on Jewish philosophy and mysticism to be much wider than was previously believed.¹⁴

9. Elias [J.] Bickerman, *The Maccabees; An Account of Their History from the Beginnings to the Fall of the House of the Hasmoneans* (New York: Schocken Books, 1947), pp. 95-96.

10. Louis Finkelstein, *The Pharisees* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962), p. cxxix.

11. Bickerman, *The Maccabees*, pp. 95-96.

12. Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine; Studies in the Literary Transmission [of] Beliefs and Manners of Palestine in the I century BCE – IV century CE* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), pp. 47ff. and pp. 68ff.

13. Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine; Studies in the Life and Manners of Jewish Palestine in the II – IV centuries CE* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1942), pp. 39ff.

14. See, particularly, Harry Wolfson’s studies of Philo.

The full impact of Greek philosophic ideas on Jewish philosophy, however, came by way of the Moslems and in an Arabic version. Saadya Gaon drew heavily on the concepts advanced by the Moslem dialectical theologians and both he and, later, Maimonides, were highly influenced by Aristotelianism. The Greek rationalist spirit dominated the thinking of both men. As Saadya wrote: "It is inconceivable that honest investigation could have been forbidden us."¹⁵

Jews in lands conquered by the Moslems absorbed not only the Arabic language itself, but the Arab attitude toward it as well, and eventually adopted that attitude, which was one of fervent attachment and veneration, with respect to Hebrew. It is probable that the emergence of Jewish interest in Hebrew linguistics was a result of the rise of Arabic linguistics a generation after the death of Mohammed. Begun in the Arab East by Saadya, Hebrew linguistic studies matured suddenly in the West. The foundation of modern Hebrew grammar was laid by Yehuda ben David Hayyuj, who was born about 950 C.E. in Fez and went at an early age to Cordoba. Thoroughly familiar with Arabic grammatical literature, Hayyuj applied to the Hebrew language the theories developed by Arabic linguistics, and established the basic grammatical law according to which all Hebrew verbal stems consist of three consonantal root letters. His works were all written originally in Arabic and translated into Hebrew.¹⁶

It is Hebrew poetry for which the Jewish Golden Age in Spain is particularly noted. Medieval Hebrew poetry, however, reached its zenith only after it adopted the syllabic meters developed by Arab poets several centuries earlier. The themes which dominate Spanish Hebrew poetry, with the exception of that of Exile and the longing for Zion and Jerusalem, have Arabic prototypes.¹⁷

Of all this outpouring of Hebrew poetry, probably only Yehuda Ha-Levi's religious poems were familiar to the average Jew in later ages because of their inclusion in Jewish liturgy. Nevertheless, the secular poetry represented the same kind of breakthrough for Hebrew literature that the Jewish reaction to the encounter with Arab scientific inquiry did, as a consequence of which Jews, for the first time, engaged in intellectual endeavor having little or no connection with any aspect of Judaism. The road to secularism had been opened.

A marked departure from the religious and social norms of mainstream Judaism was the Baal Shem Tov's concept of serving God with joy and the central position that he assigned to the unlearned *am ha-aareẓ*, as well as his own personal behavior and attitudes (his love of nature, including animals, his fondness for singing and dancing, for wine and tobacco, and his eye for beautiful women; his uncontrolled temper and use of profane language; his preoccupation with the supernatural

15. Judah Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," in Finkelstein, *Op. cit.*, v. 1, p. 199.

16. Patai, *Op. cit.*, pp. 109-112.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 115-122.

and his charismatic presence strong enough to fell groups of trembling peasants). Both attitudes and behavior were, however, part of the accepted tenor of non-Jewish life in the area where the Besht grew up. East European Christianity, whether of the established churches, Catholic and Orthodox, or of the dissident sects, was characterized by an almost childlike joy, a love of nature, and a naive obedience and devotion to a poor, humble, loving, servant-like Christ figure.

It has been emphasized that the innovations of Hasidism were not to alter basic Jewish concepts of God or of the relationship of the Jewish people to God, but were concerned with ways of living and of serving God. These ways, however, as Raphael Patai and others have pointed out, were derived largely from the non-Jewish religious and social environment.¹⁸

Like the priest, or the leader in the Russian sects, the *Zaddik* was the mediator between God and man. As in the case of the sect leaders, the *Zaddik's* charisma was his claim to leadership. A possible reflection of the hierarchical structure of the Polish Catholic clergy may be noted in the development of a ranking order among Hasidic rabbis. The Gentile feudal system provided a model for the *Zaddik's* court, the development of Hasidic dynasties and the concept of society as a hierarchical structure, thus expressed by a grandson of the Besht, Rabbi Ephraim of Sudlikov: "The Congregation has its heads, who possess the brains and the mind; and it has its eyes . . . and it has its hands . . . and it has its feet, the people of faith, who possess nothing but their faith . . ."

Singing was a favorite form of religious self-expression among both the Russian sectarians and the Polish Catholic peasants. The Baal Shem and many other Hasidim made a point of learning the songs of local shepherds and peasants. Often the original text was reinterpreted allegorically, or Hebrew explanatory phrases added; sometimes the words were discarded and the tune was sung with meaningless filler syllables. In each area, the local folk songs — Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Rumanian, Hungarian — influenced Hasidic music, while the *prisiudki*, a Ukrainian and White Russian peasant dance, was adopted by the Hasidim as their standard dance form.

With respect to the folk tales which became such an important and characteristic aspect of Hasidism, it is particularly difficult to draw the line between form and content, for these tales were infused with subject matter from Ukrainian and Polish folklore — kings, viziers, beautiful princesses, brigands and merchants traveling to faraway lands, desert islands, etc. — although the result was, indeed, uniquely Jewish.

The Jewish people have survived because we have not only accepted, but have embraced, the idea that change is the essence of life, that the challenge lies in finding the balance between change and continuity. Whether within Israel or in the Diaspora, what is crucial to the continuing

18. Ibid., pp. 180-221.

viability of Jewish cultural life is the ability to recast the essentials of Jewish thought and tradition to meet changing conditions by taking new forms or ideas, whatever their origin, and using them in our own way, as we have done from the time of Moses to the present. The most striking modern example is the State of Israel which, while embodying continuity and renewal through the concept of the Return, derives as a socio-political entity from several currents of nineteenth century European thought.

Failure to distinguish between positive and negative assimilatory processes leads to useless endeavors to "prevent assimilation." In itself, the latter is a negative goal of little long-range value, not least because, as our history clearly demonstrates, neither Jews nor Judaism can flourish in isolation. A refusal to recognize other cultures not simply as a threat but as a source of fruitfulness as well impairs our ability to discern or determine the direction of Jewish life in the present or the future.

A Whole New Megillah

Review-Essay by ERIC L. FRIEDLAND

Megillat Hanukkah, with Introduction, Translation and Commentary by ARTHUR A. CHIEL. New York. The Rabbinical Assembly, 1980. 61 pp. \$1.75.

IT HAS BEEN SOME TIME SINCE CONSERVATIVE Judaism has had any special publication for Hanukkah, the last being the late screen writer and producer Dore Schary's *Hanukkah Home Service* (New York: United Synagogue of America, 1950). The Rabbinical Assembly's new *Megillat Hanukkah*, with an introduction, translation, and glosses by Rabbi Arthur A. Chiel, goes a way towards filling the gap. According to the introduction, the present booklet, in the main comprising the *First Book of Maccabees* both in Hebrew and in English, followed by some halakhic and liturgical items, is designed to provide a *megillah*, so to speak, for a holiday lacking in one. *I Maccabees* is hereby redeemed from its state of banishment in the Apocrypha and, to all intents and purposes, accorded canonical status without benefit of synod, and treated as a festival *megillah* to boot. Suggestions have been made from time to time to reopen the whole matter of the canonicity of Scripture (e.g., Samuel Sandmel, ed., *Old Testament Issues* [New York: Harper & Row, 1968]); it has even been questioned whether, historically, the canon of the Hebrew Bible was officially standardized at Yavneh, viz., Frank Moore Cross and Shemaryahu Talmon, eds., *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1975). For instance, why should an apocryphal book of some sophistication and insight like the unexceptionable *Ben Sira* (or, under its churchly alias, *Ecclesiasticus*) be debarred while the biblical *Nahum*, which is all doomsday and downbeat, merits inclusion? Now some non-Orthodox Hanukkah liturgies have had no problem with embracing *I Maccabees*, despite its non-canonical status. What is surprising, however, is that the issue of canonicity, i.e., of which books are to be considered scriptural — is not even raised, much less grappled with. The lateness of the book's composition may or may not have anything to do with the book's being left out of the Hebrew Bible. It might be recalled that, by contrast *Daniel*, emerging from the same temporal and geopolitical contrast as *I Maccabees*, was admitted into the canon. Perhaps the Yavnean Sages, traditionally credited with determining the extent and text of the canon, were less comfortable with the Hasmonean dynasty as it had latterly become than they were with the non-militant Hasidim for whose morale *Daniel* had been written in order to sustain them during a period of dire persecution.

Possibly even more astonishing and anomalous is the nature of the

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Hebrew text in *Megillat Hanukkah*: it is a Hebrew translation of a Greek rendition of a Hebrew original that has been lost. The text here is reproduced from the scholarly *Ha-Sefarim Ha-Hizonim*, a Hebrew counterpart, edited by Abraham Kahana (1874-1946), to R. Charles' *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* from the *yishuv* period. The supposed reconstructed Hebrew is fluent and arresting enough, and Chiel's English no less smooth and readable. But the Hebrew is not that of the second-century B.C.E. author of *I Maccabees*. If one wants to stretch it further, one might conceivably ask. . . why not *II Maccabees*, written originally in Greek, as it contains the ever-moving story of Hannah and her Seven Sons and of the elderly Eleazar, missing in the first book? While there probably need be no real objection, in fine, to restoring long-neglected books of the Apocrypha to a place in the synagogue, it is nonetheless mightily odd to sanctify any one of the "outside books" by reading it in a Hebrew translation from another language, which, in turn, is based on a Hebrew source long since vanished.

The present booklet also has rules and a service for the Hanukkah candle-lighting, along with a couple of songs, a meditation, and a responsive reading (for which the sequence runs counter the pagination, for some unexplained reason). The much-beloved five-stanza hymn "*Ma'oz Zur*" is represented here by only a single stanza; so, too, is the well-known English paraphrase, "Rock of Ages." It is a shame that such a stirring song should be allowed no more than a solitary stanza. Could it be that the esoteric literary allusions in the Hebrew verses presented problems, such as the fact that most of the allusions had little to do with Hanukkah per se? To obviate such difficulties, Leopold Stein, in the mid-nineteenth century, wrote a German paraphrase ("*Gott, mein Licht*") of "*Ma'oz Zur*" that was widely sung in Central Europe and in many an American congregation composed of German speaking immigrants well over a hundred years ago. As the process of Americanization gained in strength, Marcus Jastrow, of the proto-Conservative School, took it upon himself to put Stein's six stanzas into English ("*My Salvation's Tower*")¹ — which became

1. For his revision (Philadelphia, 1873) of Benjamin Szold's *Abodath Israel*, Jastrow furnished an English translation of Leopold Stein's "*Gott, mein Licht*." Reproduced here are the lyrics with those lines brought over to Gottheil's "Rock of Ages" underlined:

My Salvation's Tower

1

I will praise, O Lord, thy grace,
 Fountain of all power!
 Thou'rt in storms my sheltering place,
 My salvation's tower.
 What if men *assail* me?
 God, my Lord,
Breaks their sword,
 He will never fail me.

2

Ever when I sighed in night,
 When the world did wound me,
 God led me again to light,
 And his hand upbound me.
 Darkness oft set round me,—
 He was nigh
 From on high,
 And his mercy found me.

the basis of the improved version of "Rock of Ages," by Gustav Gottheil² of the Reform camp. There is barely a Reform or Conservative prayerbook in English-speaking lands that does not have "Rock of Ages" alongside, or in place, of "*Ma'oz Zur*." A couple of prayerbooks, unhappy with the Hebrew wording of "*Ma'oz Zur*" have gone as far as to emend it, in particular the Reconstructionist prayerbook and the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues' *Service of the Heart* (London, 1967), the latter in imitation of the style of *Psalms*. Perhaps the most enterprising of all, since Jastrow's version, is the fresh and fairly literal English verse rendition as it appears in the British Reform *Forms of Prayer* (London, 1977) displacing "Rock of Ages" all together. Let me rehearse it in full as it is not very likely that many American Jews will have access to that versatile prayerbook:³

3

He saved me from Pharaoh's hand,
When I cried in anguish;
Shattered Haman's haughty wand,
As he saw me languish.—
When an enemy harmed me,
Light and love
From above
'Gainst his charges charmed me.

5

Cherishing a holy flame
In their hearts unbending,
The Asmonean tribe won fame
And renown unending.
Round their heads victorious
Waving palms,
Singing psalms,
Praised they God the glorious.

2. Gustav Gottheil, *Sun and Shield* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1896), pp. 374-375. At the most, stanzas #1, #4, and #5 of "Rock of Ages" are ordinarily repeated in today's prayerbooks; usually left unquoted are the following stanzas (#2 and #3):

Syria's king had in his pride
Boastful undertaken:
Judah's God shall be dethroned
And His law forsaken.
Fire and sword shall serve him;
No resistance swerve him
From his bent,
No lament
Of the Jews unnerve him.

Notice that the original "*Ma'oz Zur*" has five stanzas.

3. The one stanza that goes un-Englished is the fourth one, having to do with Haman's fall. Interestingly, Stein saw no need to ignore that episode in Israel's redemption-filled past:

*Pharao traf seine Hand.
Als mein Volk verzagte;*

4

With my army God did side; --
We, the few and humble,
Checked the Syrian's furious tide,
Made the mighty stumble.
Heroes, young and hoary,
Spilt their blood
For their God,
Giving him the glory.

6

By the sheen of cheerful lights,
Priests, approved in sufferings,
Came to Zion, new from fights,
Bringing God their offerings, —
Father of Creation!
As this night,
Let joys light,
Ever crown thy nation!

But he knew not yet that faith
Which is death-defying,
And, for victory, not on man,
But on God relying;
See the few, the humble
Make the mighty stumble;
And the yoke,
Stroke on stroke,
From the nation crumble.

1

Fortress, rock who sets me free,
how fine it is to sing Your praise.
When my house of prayer shall be,
our offerings of thanks we'll raise.
The time You end all slaughter,
enemies shall falter.
I'll complete
a song to greet
and dedicate the altar.

2

How my soul was filled with strife,
sorrow robbed my strength from me.
Bitter hardship ruled my life,
bound by Egypt's slavery.
God let His mighty hand show,
to help His chosen people go.
Pharaoh's power,
his finest flower,
sank into the depths below.

3

Brought to God's own holy place
even there no peace I found.
Sent to exile in disgrace,
to other gods I still felt bound.
I drank the wine of madness,
seventy years of sadness.
Babylon fell;
Zerubabel
brought salvation's gladness.

4

When the Greeks were gathered round
in the Maccabean days,
broke my towers to the ground,
spoilt the oil used for Your praise.
Your sign then guided our fate,
one day's oil lasted for eight.
Our wise men
established then
this festival we celebrate.

The second musical selection for Hanukkah in *Megillat Hanukkah* is the bouncy "*Mi Yemallel*," accompanied by transliteration but no translation. Why this is the case is hard to tell. Afterwards there is a set of regulations affecting the kindling of the Hanukkah lights. The next pair of items are a right-on-target meditation of Andre Ungar ("Overcoming the inner as well as the external enemy, cleansing the polluted sanctuary, rekindling the extinguished lights is a hard, almost miraculous endeavor [which] must be accomplished in every age") and a disappointingly dreary responsive reading, in which the sole novelty, taken over from the new Conservative Passover Hagaddah is the substitution of the word "*Adonai*" for "Lord." (Our Yiddish-speaking forebears did not demur to addressing God as "*Gott in him'l*" or even endearing the term more by bringing Him down to earth with *Gottenu* — whilst keeping the Hebrew *ribbono shel 'olam* and *ha-qadosh barukh hu* in popular parlance.)

It might have been more functional to have a special service for Hanukkah either in the context of a Ma'ariv Service or a Sabbath Eve Service, including, say, Psalm 30 or parts of the *Hallel* as well as extracts from I (or II!) *Maccabees* and the lighting of the *hanukkiyah*. There is a grow-

*Hamans stolze Grösse schwand,
Als vor Gott ich klagte.
Wann ein Feind mich plagte,
Niemand Trost mir sagte,
Trost und liebe fehlte nicht,
So an Gott ich dachte.*

(Leopold Stein, *Seder ha-'Avodah: Gebetbuch für Israelitische Gemeinden, Sabbath und Festtage I*, [Frankfurt am Main. Main, 1860]; cf. Jastrow's rendition in his third stanza in note #1 above.)

ing tendency toward celebrating the Maccabean holiday in a big way; why not improve the occasion by giving it grand liturgical expression for at least an evening? The lamented *Einheitsgebetbuch*, a combined liturgical effort of the liberal synagogues in Germany before Hitler's coming to power and, hence, shortlived, provided such a full-scale service for the First Night of Hanukkah (not to mention a choice of four distinct renditions of "Ma-oz Zur" in German in addition to Stein's "*Gott, mein Licht, mein Schutz und Hort*"). Why not revive and adapt the experiment here and now, when and where it is certain to take stronger hold? Besides, the Conservative Movement needs some nudging. It has not been one to rush into print in the liturgical sphere, which is in certain respects probably well and good. It has thus succeeded in avoiding the twin traps of the trendy and the ephemeral, but its deliberativeness and caution do, at intervals, pass for ploddingness and trepidity. The Movement is alive with learning, spirituality, and literary craft, and the need is pressing. "*Et la'asot . . .*"⁴

4. After this review was written the final, revised edition of the Conservative *Passover Hagaddah* came out, just in time for the celebration of Pesah 5742, and the book is patently a joy both to behold and to use. May this augur well for more good — and still-awaited — things to come in the liturgical sphere.

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The Jewish Muse

Review-Essay by BERNHARD FRANK

Hebrew Ballads and Other Poems, by ELSE LASKER-SCHÜLER, translated with introduction by Audri Durchslag and Jeanette Litman-Demeestère. Phil., JPS, 1981. 125 pages, paper, \$6.95. Jewish Poetry Series.

The Syrian-African Rift and Other Poems, by AVOTH YESHURUN, translated with a foreword by Harold Schimmel. Phil., JPS, 1981. 153 pages, paper, \$7.95. Jewish Poetry Series.

In Light of Genesis, by PAMELA WHITE HADAS. Phil., JPS, 1981. 118 pages, paper, \$6.95. Jewish Poetry Series.

THE JEWISH POETRY SERIES, PUT OUT BY the Jewish Publication Society of America, has been established to encourage poetic translations from the works of Jewish poets and to publish "significant work by Jewish poets in America, Israel, and throughout the world." Three volumes have appeared to date.

Else Lasker-Schüler: The Black Swan of Israel

Else Lasker-Schüler was born into a Jewish petit-bourgeois family in Eberfeld, Germany, in 1869. After the age of eleven, because of her poor health she was educated by private tutors. Her early years, which had allowed her imaginative powers free play, were marred by the death, first of her favorite brother and then, in 1890, of her mother. In 1894 she married Dr. Berthold Lasker and moved to Berlin. The marriage, which she considered an "imprisonment," broke up five years later. That same year she gave birth to a son whose paternity remains shrouded in mystery.

Thereafter Lasker-Schüler began the Bohemian existence which she was to maintain to the end of her life. Gottfried Benn, the poet and critic with whom she had a brief affair, describes her in his memoirs:

She was small at the time and boyishly thin, with pitch-black short-cropped hair, which was rare in those days. Her huge animated raven-black eyes always had an elusive, mysterious look. Whether at that time or later, it was impossible to go anywhere with her without everyone stopping to stare: her flowing skirts or pants, incredible capes, her entire being bedecked with gaudy fake jewelry, necklaces, earrings, rings. . . . She hardly ate and would live for weeks on nothing but nuts and fruit. She often slept on park benches and was always poor in whatever situation she found herself.

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Else Lasker-Schüler simply would not make a separation between art and life, a separation which would have allowed her to “fit in” with the world at large. Her notable associates — Benn, painter Franz Marc, author Franz Werfel, and George Levin, the critic composer to whom she was married from 1901 to 1911 — created a buffer zone between her and the world. Yet when she had to flee Nazi Germany and took up residence in pioneer-day Jerusalem, public reaction to her unchanged life-style must have caused her considerable anguish. Her friend, Rachel Katinka writes:

Else appeared dressed in silk, her hair neatly made. She wore wooden earrings she had bought in Bethlehem and dyed azure and around her neck, a string of brown glass beads. She sat down and requested that we sit on the rug at some distance away from her. She read us her poems for three whole hours. . . . When I saw her for the last time, she was sick and remarked with bitterness: “The same Jerusalem over which I fought with my friends when I was little and because of which I was expelled from school, the same Jerusalem that I have glorified so in my poems offers me no home. . . .”

Living, despite concerned friends’ assistance, in unrelieved penury, Else Lasker-Schüler suffered a heart attack and died in January 1945. She lies buried at the foot of the Mount of Olives.

I feel indebted to the Jewish Poetry Series for introducing me to the work of this fine lyric poet whom Peter Hille called “the Black Swan of Israel.” Her work, in terms of American poetry, might fall somewhere between the traditional metrics and lyricism of Edna St. Vincent Millay and the sharper wit and freshness of Louise Bogan. Happily, a look at the table of contents is misleading; the poem-titles range from the sentimental to the banal: “I Am Sad,” “Homesickness,” “My Lovesong,” “My Mother.” The poems themselves, however, are fresh and touching. Here is what the poet does with as tired a subject as “Full Moon”:

The moon swims softly through my blood —
Drowsing sounds are the eyes of the days,
Ebbing — flowing —

I cannot find your lips . .
Where are you, o distant city,
With your fragrant bliss?

My eyelids set
Over the world — everything sleeps.

Despite some of the lost lyricism of the original, enough remains in this translation to demonstrate the free flow of the poet’s imagination. In the very opening line, with unblinking solipsism, she *internalizes* the moon. The second line plays with synesthesia: sounds replace the sense of vision; that is, what were the *eyes* of the day are replaced by the *sounds* of sleep. “Ebbing — flowing —” cannot capture the diction of the poet: “*Wandelhin — taumelher* —” the mere sound of which bespeaks intoxication.

Yearning and alienation, both never far from her life, emerge in the second stanza: The desired city is tempting with its fragrances, but the speaker cannot find its lips. Unable to reach *out*, the speaker returns, in the last stanza, to solipsism: it is not the sun which sets, but the closing eyelids which blot out the world. The poem, using the full moon as take-off point, becomes an impressionist piece strewn with desire, loss and forgetting.

Less successful are the poems written to, and about, personages of her Berlin circle: Benn, Marc, Werfel, Georg Trakl and George Grosz. The immediacy of the references gone, these works have succumbed to the passage of time.

The *Hebrew Ballads* for which Lasker-Schüler was best known are offered almost in their entirety (a second, very fine, very homoerotic "David and Jonathan" has, inexplicably, been omitted). The *Ballads* are *not* ballads — the poet seems to have lacked a *penchant* for narrative poetry, the plot invention and character development which the form calls for. The glimpses that we catch of Abel, Abraham and Isaak, Jacob, Joseph and so on, are static. I suspect that the poems were part of a plan, and that they did not come to the poet spontaneously. Far better would it have been had these small impressionistic blips been titled, like so many others of her poems, say, "Young Mother" for "Mary of Nazareth," in which case we would not have been disappointed with the lovely but inconclusive last lines: "And the great sky there/ In a short blue dress!"

In Jerusalem, Lasker-Schüler continued to write in German and the title poem of her last volume, *My Blue Piano*, demonstrates her work at its most powerful:

At home I have a blue piano
But have no note to play.

It stands in the shadow of the cellar door,
There since the world's decay.

Four star-hands play harmony
— The Moon-maiden sang in her boat —
Now the rats dance janglingly.

Broken is the keyboard . . .
I weep for the blue dead.

Ah, dear angel, open to me
— What bitter bread I ate —
Even against the law's decree,
In life, heaven's gate.

The speaker here, though bitter, does not succumb to self-pity. The musical instrument — perhaps the poet's inspiration, perhaps the woman's courage, is broken (ironically, when she is singing at her very best). Blue, Lasker-Schüler's favorite and most often used color, doubles here as both positive — the blue piano — and negative — the blue dead. To

escape from the pain of living the speaker asks, against the laws of nature, to be transported to heaven while still alive. In the original the piece is tightly structured, with only two rhymes for the entire poem. The incongruity of the bitterness of the matter and the lightness of the tone reminds us of the best of Emily Dickinson.

Hebrew Ballads and Other Poems has a gentle, admiring preface by the Israeli poet, Yehuda Amichai, who is also co-editor of the Jewish Poetry Series. The introduction by the translators, Durchslag and Litman-Demeestère, is readable and thorough. I would quibble only with the overuse of quotations calling the poet “one of the most striking women in world literature,” and “the greatest lyric poet of modern Germany.” Such extravagant praise tends to show up Lasker-Schüler’s weaknesses; she lacks, for example, Emily Dickinson’s intellectual strain, Rilke’s grasp of the “*Dinge*” — the objects that populate the world. The notes at the back, offering no elucidation, merely list to whom each poem was dedicated; such excess baggage is best left to scholarly journals.

The translation is most competent, faithful without calling attention to itself. Yet the lyricism of the poet eludes the translators. This loss of the original texture is dramatically evidenced in a brief ditty written for Gottfried Benn:

Sublime King Giselheer
Thrust his spear
Into my heart.

With the rhythm gone out of it, the poem seems mere gibberish, yet the original has both bounce and charm:

*Der hehre König Giselheer
Stiess mit seinem Lanzenspeer
Mitten in mein Herz.*

Because of this loss in transit, the book would be most satisfying for bilingual readers with at least a smattering of German — enough to read the original out loud — who might then turn for vocabulary-help to the solidly accurate translations.

Avoth Yeshurun: The Cubist of Language

Avoth Yeshurun (formerly Yechiel Perlmutter) was born in Poland in 1904 and emigrated to Palestine in 1925. His first volume of poetry, *On the Wisdom of Roads*, appeared in 1942 and he has since won the prestigious Bialik and Brenner awards for his verse. The current volume draws heavily on his 1974 collection, *The Syrian-African Rift*. The title is an allusion to Israel’s location along the geological rift of that name, that extends down the Jordan river and, through the Dead Sea, to Elat. Since the stability of a country sitting atop such a rift is dubious, the phrase becomes an ironic metaphor for the constant *political* threat under which Israel struggles to

survive. This sense of threat runs through the poems that deal with the 1973 Yom-Kippur War, when Israel, unexpectedly attacked, had literally to pluck its army out of the synagogues. In "The poem on the eve of this day" Yeshurun writes:

The sages say, that at the time the Syrian-African rift
occurred, the celestial inhabitants were not
up-to-date. Each man was engaged
at his trade. In grinding hatchets. In splitting beasts.

Ancient humanity and land of the axe.
And when those wanted some change on the earth
they have to do it by putting to sleep.
After that they waken the earth.

Like they did to me once in isolation in narcosis
under the plywood and the roof
in Beilinson Hospital: "Yeshurun, you underwent an operation!"
And here I am. Yom Kippur.

Although there is irony there, a mocking of Israel's unreadiness for battle, there is no bitterness; the tone is light, the head of the poet-speaker seems to be wagging. And the personal analogy of the military *operation* to a personal one — an operation performed before the patient was aware of it — is amusingly on target.

Another politically oriented poem called "Rocket" is ostensibly about a small household plant that was dislodged from its pot. Yet there is that militaristic *title*, and with the last line of the poem, "Saw the plant's throat [or maw]. Saw the throat [or maw] outside the plant," Israel among the hostile nations around it is inevitably evoked.

In the section entitled "Please Don't Ask," Yeshurun turns to a *personal* rift — the woman deserted by her lover, the child whose parents divorce, the father and son who have become estranged.

Yeshurun's work does not make easy reading; he is sparse, oblique. Like the cubists of painting, he gives us a title for clue (remember those *Women with Mandolin?*), a nose here, an eye there, maybe the curve of the mandolin — but to put the pieces together into a cohesive whole, that takes some doing.

Perhaps that is why Harold Schimmel's translation is such a resounding failure. If the translator does not understand the intent of the poem as a whole, his version is apt to stray far from the original. Avotl Yeshurun relies heavily upon playing with language, freshening the syntax of the Hebrew to startling effect. When Schimmel tries the same in English he comes up with an incomprehensible mumbo-jumbo all his own. "I waited impa' for the cloud to go," must baffle those who cannot read the accompanying Hebrew. Or look at the grammar of, "The wild dove is the most least-called." Or, "Absorbs according to the body/ inward/ just as much as she can drops." Yeshurun's word play works in the original; Harold Schimmel's does not. Leaving certain words in the Hebrew

does not help either. What is the reader to make of *yoreh* (first rain), or *dunam* (a land measure)? The introduction shuttles between the obscure, "Pose is an amplification and sophistication, pose is inherent in every separate retinal image. It implies arrangement by exclusion and disposition by inclusion," and the pseudo-poetic, "Yiddish tends to animate its objects . . . they belong like the hump to the hunchback."

There is nothing wrong with Harold Schimmel's command of Hebrew, and the book provides valuable notes at the back, yet it is a pity that this first volume of Yeshurun's work in English should remain a closed book to anyone who cannot read the facing Hebrew.

Pamela White Hadas: Poet of Affectation

Pamela White Hadas, who lives in St. Louis, Missouri, is author of the scholarly *Marianne Moore: Poet of Affection* and the Witter Bynner Prize-winning volume of monologues, *Designing Women*.

Her poems, *In the Light of Genesis*, written in English, can be judged without the interposition of a translation and its attendant hazards. Ms. Hadas presents us with three monologues and a narrative poem, each depicting the life of a woman. In the first monologue we meet Lilith, Adam's reputed, extra-Biblical *first* wife. Sprung into being when God inadvertently caught his breath at the sight of his creation, Lilith is the rebel-figure associated with the devil; she is too sexually domineering to suit Adam and is, of course, replaced by Eve. As recluse in the desert she is hardened beyond self-pity by learning to endure suffering; presently she is elevated to a God-related figure, no longer demonic. The fascinating content of this monologue is weighted down, unfortunately, by the lengthy prose arguments preceding each section; the poem itself is dwarfed by them.

In the second monologue, Sarah, Abraham's wife, tells her tale of hope and woe, proceeding pretty much along Biblical lines: her marriage to Abraham, the sojourn in Egypt, the near-sacrifice of Isaac. In the third monologue, we meet Rahel Varnhagen (1771-1833), a real-life figure who married a gentile and converted to Christianity. The last of the poems, "Woman with Quasar," relates the story of a modern day astronomist.

There are many superb lines scattered throughout Ms. Hadas' book. Here is a quick sampler: "to learn the way the willow grows,/ find some shape in drift," says Lilith. And Rahel Varnhagen, "Abroad I'm from Berlin, but in Berlin/ I'm from the judengasse." And again, "The truth is careless," and "There is great potential in emptiness,/ rainbows in the simplest jellyfish," lines both wise and poetic. Yet Ms. Hadas seems to be torn between poet and scholar. The poet feels, and sings. The scholar meditates and, unforgivably, puns:

Anyone, to use an analogue, can put a mustache on a poster of Molly Picon, but there is only *one* Molly. The pun is the mustache, and it takes little gift to make it. And Ms. Hadas' work swarms: "Adam was carefully hedging his *bêtes*," "more than an immaculate misconception," "Her frame of reverence," "her . . . Nobel glance." All the women, at one time or another, sound like members of an English Department at the annual tea.

I turned for help to her earlier *Designing Women* which, though less pushed, reads similarly. Marilyn Monroe depicts her life in terms of movie-technology:

To do the whole scene . . . over and over
be taken in, exposed . . . you get the picture.

The real MM was nowhere near the use of such sustained *double-entendres*. And Cassandra, the princess, the beloved of Apollo, ends her plaint like a common fish-wife:

Troy burns. Now Agamemnon's blood . . .
I see —
beyond belief —
too soon, too late — *too bad*. [italics mine]

Of Marianne Moore, whom she clearly venerates, Ms. Hadas writes, "Style for [her] is most proper when 'uncursed by self-inspection.'" And this is where Ms. Hadas fails — in striving for effect, she stoops to affectation.

The series deserves thanks for its support of Jewish art and artist; one would hope that the works selected for future volumes will *not* depend on the number of Judaic motifs in the poet's work but will be chosen on the basis of merit alone. *Carte blanche* is the artists' oxygen.

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Jewish Justice

Jewish Justice and Reconciliation: History of the Jewish-Conciliation Board of America, 1930-1968. By ISRAEL GOLDSTEIN. New York, KTAV Publishing House, 1981. 252 pp., \$17.50.

Reviewed by LEO PFEFFER

ISRAEL GOLDSTEIN collects organizational presidencies the way some politicians and statesmen collect honorary degrees, but with one vital difference. An honorary degree is just that; the recipient is not expected to do anything with it, other than perhaps flaunt it on appropriate occasions. In that sense, Dr. Goldstein's presidencies have been anything but honorary (although he is very much honored, and, at least by the congregation he served for many years before his *aliyah* to Israel, also revered). He has been an active leader in almost all of the organizations which have honored him by electing him president; among many others, — the Synagogue Council of America, American Jewish Congress, Zionist Organization of America, Jewish National Fund, and the Jewish Conciliation Board of America. It is the last-named organization to which this book is devoted.

In a sense, this volume of some 250 pages is really two books. The first, subtitled "A Review of Jewish Juridical Autonomy," deals with Jewish courts in individual countries, including Eretz Yisrael (never designated in this part as "Israel" or "Palestine") from the destruction of Judea to the establishment of Jewish statehood in 1948. Geographically, all the major nations throughout the world, including the United States, are covered. The degree of governmental permissiveness in respect to adjudication of intra-Jewish disputes naturally varied in different nations

throughout the nineteen centuries since the destruction of the Temple and of Judea. In some places and during some periods an adjudication by a *Beth Din* was recognized and enforced by the governments almost as if it had been rendered by one of their own tribunals. On the other extreme were instances when even the maintenance of a *Beth Din* was a punishable offense. On the whole, *Batei Din* were sanctioned by the respective governments, either expressly, as in Moslem countries, or implicitly, as in Christian Europe.

This part of Dr. Goldstein's book sets forth a convenient summary of a subject that has been much treated in standard histories of Jewry. The remaining two-thirds presents something that is truly original and, at least to me, fascinating. What it does is to set forth brief summaries of disputes and their disposition among the almost forty years of his presidency. Listed are some 500 persons who, during the period, served as "judges." Use of this term, and of "plaintiffs" and "defendants" is, I think, unfortunate. The proceedings of the Board, uniformly conducted in Yiddish, were not judicial; they were not the equivalent of the formalistic, judicial *Beth Din* of Orthodox Jewry. On the contrary, the purpose of the Jewish Conciliation Board was just that, conciliation, not adjudication, and if it was a court, it was, as it became known, a "court without a gavel."

A minority of these 500 were rabbis and, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, encompassed all three branches — Orthodox, (although not hasidic), Conservative and Reform. (A Reform Rabbi, Julius Mark, succeeded Dr. Goldstein as President of the Board.) Others reflected a cross-section of Jewish professional life, constituting something of a Who's Who in American Jewry including, among

others, writers, bankers, judges, lawyers, merchants, members of the national and state legislatures, Jewish community organization officers and government officials.

Within the scope of the Board's activities was encompassed a variety of intra-Jewish conflicts involving marital and parental claims for support, family differences and tensions, loan repayment, funeral and burial plot disputes, tenants' complaints, small business claims, Landsmanshaften controversies, congregational arguments and others. Each complaint was heard by a panel of three members, and the proceedings were wholly informal and sympathetic. The objective was compromise and conciliation rather than adjudication; even when the panel could not avoid issuing judgment, it almost always effected a *de facto* compromise. Unlike courts of law, which generally must decide either for the plaintiff or the defendant and by the law of chance will decide more or less equally between the two groups, the Board, in at least a majority of cases, decided for the complainant, but in an amount less than that originally demanded. It was a rare instance in which the complainant did not go home with something.

Perhaps the best way to review this delightful book is to set forth verbatim the following few typical examples of the controversies and decisions:

The plaintiff in one case complained that his wife had taken control of his business and refused to give him any money. The wife claimed that her husband was a habitual gambler and, if permitted, would fritter away all his earnings.

The judges ruled that the husband receive a small weekly allowance, but that the wife continue to manage both the home and the business.

* * *

A woman living apart from her husband complained to the Board that he was not taking adequate care of their eighteen-year-old son, who resided with him. During the course of the hearing, the judges realized that the wife had actually come to the Board in hope of achieving reconciliation. The husband too, it seemed, wished to return to his wife. Neither had known how to approach the other, and they were overjoyed at the judges' decision that they resume life together. In this case, the child was the motivating force for a reconciliation.

* * *

A father complained to the Board that his son had been hired to sing in a synagogue choir during the High Holy Days, but had not yet received payment. The cantor who had hired the boy testified that, although the lad had attended the choir on Rosh Hashanah, he had not participated in the singing. Furthermore, although the father had notified him that his son would not attend on Yom Kippur, thus obliging the cantor to hire someone in his place, the boy still came. He stood with the choir, but did not sing.

The judges ruled that, since the cantor had allowed the boy to remain, he should pay him. The cantor paid the father, who then signed an undertaking that he would make no further claims against the cantor.

* * *

The estranged family of a deceased member of a Landsmanshaft claimed a certain amount from his society, in order to pay for the erection of a stone. The recording secretary, who had been a friend of the deceased, testified that the man had written his family out of his will and had requested that the society make all funeral and memorial stone arrangements. The secretary added that the family had not even attended the funeral.

The judges decided that \$125 of the \$200 benefit payment should be given the widow, and that the remaining \$75 be paid to her after the cost of the headstone had been defrayed.

* * *

A distraught couple begged for help in regard to their daughter, who had married a French non-Jew. The girl, who had been raised in an observant Jewish home and who had received a Jewish education, testified that her husband had undergone conversion, following which their Jewish marriage ceremony took place in France.

The rabbi on the panel offered to cable the Chief Rabbi of France, whom he knew personally, for a ruling as to the validity of the conversion and marriage, in order to ease the parents' minds. He also offered to perform a repeat conversion and a religious marriage ceremony without fee, if these proved necessary.

* * *

People would often turn to the Board for advice before making a decisive change in their lives. One man, for example, had been employed by his brother-in-law and had been earning a steady salary, though not a high one. Now he had been offered a partnership in his father-in-law's store, and his wife, anxious that her husband improve his situation, was urging him to accept the offer.

The man felt uncertain about the matter. He wanted assurances that he would indeed be a partner, and that he would be respected as such. The businessman judging his case offered to investigate the store and then advise the applicant as to whether the partnership would be a financially sound step.

* * *

The last two items indicate that the Jewish Conciliation Board filled a need and provided a familial function much like that of the hasidic rebbe in Crown Heights or Williamsburg. Even in New York, however, the majority of Jews are not hasidim, and have risen dramatically in American economic and social ranks. For them, an institution such as the

Board has, in large measure, outlived its usefulness. In later years, the Board retained social workers as part of its staff and often called upon the professionals of the Jewish Family Service, affiliated with the New York Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, for assistance and guidance. Most recently, the Board has undergone a radical change by itself becoming part of the Federation's Jewish Family Service, offering the assistance that can best be tendered by persons professionally trained and qualified to provide it. In sum, the Jewish Conciliation Board is now an exciting but closed chapter in American Jewish history.

LEO PFEFFER is professor of political science, Long Island University, and special counsel for the American Jewish Congress.

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Critics, Too, Need Their Consciousness Raised

Immigrant-Survivors: Post-Holocaust Consciousness in Recent Jewish American Fiction. By DOROTHY SEIDMAN BILIK. Middletown, Connecticut. Wesleyan University Press, 1981. 216 pp., \$15.95.

Reviewed by MIRIAM ROSHWALD

THIS IS A sad book. It is sad on several planes. First, the subject matter, which is defined in the title: *Immigrant-Survivors*, namely, Jewish immigrants in America who have survived the Holocaust. Then, the subtitle: the post-Holocaust consciousness in recent Jewish American fiction. The ailing state of Jewish-American fiction is in itself sufficient to induce a sense of bereavement. When a great culture becomes shrivelled and distorted on an inimical soil it is bad enough. Reduce it further to the consciousness of fictional characters whose admitted pre-Holocaust commitment to Judaism was tangential at best, and what you are getting are shreds and tatters, or, to use Bilik's euphemism, "fragments" of a culture. The fact that the characters are survivors of the Holocaust does not make them more Jewish. It does not necessarily "imbue" them "with the moral power and the will to preserve and transmit in the American Diaspora the Jewish heritage that was tragically destroyed in Europe" (p. 5). Being survivors of unprecedented bestiality inflicted by man upon man makes them part of the Jewish history of martyrology and of mankind's darkest chapter, but it does not make them "embodiments" of Judaism. There is nothing Jewish about the Holocaust, except that it happened to the Jews.

Finally, the author, too, is sadly wanting as a surveyor of, and commentator on, Jewish culture.

Indeed, it is hard to ascertain what makes one sadder about this book, the Jewish cultural poverty which is revealed by the writers chosen by the author (I.B. Singer excepted, who is not, strictly speaking, an American writer), or the author herself who, alas, blends all too well with the Jewish desolation which informs the material of her choice.

The underlying hypothesis of this book is that, starting with the late fifties, the Jewish-American novel underwent an important change. Whereas until then the central theme was that of "crisis of identity" with the attendant pangs of acculturation and assimilation, the trend shifted thereafter to questions of renewed connection with the Jewish past and its traditions.

Contrary to earlier pronouncements by such critics as Robert Alter, Alan Guttman, and Leslie Fiedler, who predicted a "diminution of interest in Jewish subject matter," Bilik finds "a resurgence of interest in the European and American Jewish past" (p. 5). As examples of this renewed interest she chooses works which directly employ a Holocaust survivor as a center of consciousness. Included are Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant* (1957) and *The Magic Barrel* (1958), Edward Wallant's *The Pawnbroker* (1961), Susan Fromberg Schaeffer's *Anya* (1974), Isaac Bashevis Singer's *Enemies* (1972), Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970), and Arthur Cohen's *In the Days of Simon Stern* (1973). The second and central part of the book deals with the individual novelists, each in a separate chapter. Here Bilik presents us with the particular role which each author assigned to his immigrant survivor. The titles to these chapters aptly encapsulate both the writers' way of looking at their immigrant protagonists and Bilik's commentary on each of them. Here are some examples:

"Malamud's Secular Saints and Comic Jobs," "Wallant's Reborn Immigrant and Redeemed Survivor," "Schaeffer's Romantic Survivor," "Singer's Diasporan Survivor," "Bellow's Worldly 'Tzadik,'" "Cohen's Ultimate Diasporan."

Dorothy Bilik is a serious and conscientious critic. She is well read in her subject matter, thorough, and sympathetic; her knowledge of literary criticism does her credit. She avails herself of a variety of critical methods, as the dust jacket of the book informs us: "Comparative, analytical, linguistic and structural." Invoking Northrop Frye, she divides the novels in her discussion into the naturalistic or historical genre, which includes those by Edward Wallant and Susan Fromberg Schaeffer, and the anatomical one, into which fall those of Saul Bellow, I.B. Singer, and Arthur Cohen. Ms. Bilik is sensitive to the linguistic nuances which the authors employ. Neither does she shirk the more sublime spheres, and plunges courageously into metaphysical, mythological and cabalistic distinctions. And, yet, there persists an uncomfortable feeling throughout the book that there is a fundamental flaw in the approach. It stems from the slanted concept which she has of the cultural heritage which she tries to detect in the works she has chosen, and all of her erudition, honorable intentions and meticulous analysis cannot compensate for it.

In the endeavor to substantiate her thesis that the post-Holocaust immigrant fiction tends to take its "archetypes, metaphors, and images . . . from the Bible and other Jewish sources rather than from Jungian psychology or Greek mythology" (p. 9), she blunders into unfortunate evocations and incongruous parallelisms. Thus, she writes:

The success story of the Jewish immigrant in America has a biblical

parallel in the story of Joseph, the protoimmigrant (p. 18).

And,

[The] aspect of linguistic dislocation involved in the loss of mother tongue and the need to learn other tongues . . . is prefigured in the biblical myth of the Tower of Babel with its movement from a universal language to a multiplicity of languages (p. 19).

This linking of the Hebrew Bible to the themes of immigrant literature reduces the Bible to a reference book on myths and fables, handy for writers in search of "Jewish" ideas. Her "parallelisms" and "prefigurations" are based on superficial similarities. Rather than prove the organic association between the American-Jewish literature and the Jewish heritage, they only serve to emphasize the alienation between the two. This is a case of confusing the external husk for the inner kernel.

It was Bertrand Russell who somewhere commented, in his im-pish fashion, that if *Hamlet* were to be judged according to pragmatic tenets, the message of the play would be reduced to the problem of "how to kill an uncle." What the hypothetical pragmatist does to Shakespeare, Bilik is doing to the Bible. The connection between Joseph (wasn't it Leo Tolstoy who thought it to be one of the most poetical stories of world literature?) and the modern day success story of the Jewish immigrant in America is as far fetched as that between *Hamlet* and the problem of disposing of an uncle.

To Ms. Bilik, the Bible is a dead book, an antiquarian's paradise for its "mythopoeia of the Fall, Exile, and Dispersion, renewal and survival" (p. 19). One suspects that it is a sealed book to her as well. There is scanty evidence of her first hand knowledge of this primary source. Her knowledge of Hebrew seems

to be elementary at best, a deficiency which seriously damages her as a spokesperson for the infinite richness, suggestiveness, pathos, drama and sheer beauty of the Bible and its many-faceted impact on its people. For example, she brings up the tradition of "quarreling with God," which, as she rightly points out, goes back to Job and the patriarchs. Yet, instead of referring one to the biblical text, as would seem only natural, she brings as her source the Yiddish, derivative, folk expression, *krign sikh mit Got*. Pleading and arguing with God can be traced back to Abraham who, in his attempt to dissuade the Almighty from destroying Sodom and Gomorrah ("peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city") gave expression to a moral sensitivity which withstood every trial in the Jews' long history: "... That be far from thee ... to slay the righteous with the wicked ... Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:24, 25). This challenge to absolute authority which reverberates throughout Jewish thought and is one of its main moral foundations, is hardly recognizable in the homely Yiddish of *krign sikh mit Got*. Unwittingly, she stresses the amateurish nature of her familiarity with Judaism when, in the next breath, she adds: "Another fragment rescued," because the character who is discussed expresses doubts about God's omnipotence and benevolence. Pleading with God, or questioning his absoluteness, is not a "fragment" in Judaism, and Judaism is not an extinct civilization, to be deciphered from a heap of broken pottery. If this is the way that the Jewish-American writers present it, then Bilik, as a critic, must expose it, not echo it.

As if to compensate for her deficiency, Bilik overlards her discourse with professional terminology and draws her references,

comparisons, allusions and associations from Western culture. There are Wordsworth and Yeats, Dos-
toevsky and Aristotle, negative capability and intimations of immortality, but the immense wealth of Jewish poetry and Hebraic idiom have no place in her imaginative landscape. The cultural legacy which she discusses — be it ancient, medieval, modern or recent — is not an integral part of her sensibility. To the degree that she does draw from Jewish sources, she depends primarily on Yiddish culture. Rich and venerable as that culture is, it is an offshoot of the Jewish heritage which served the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe. Its enormous vitality, freshness, and universal appeal came to it from the Hebrew sources, which nourished it from generation to generation in the houses of study, synagogues, religious observances and family traditions. It is acceptable to treat Yiddish culture as a matrix of Judaism as long as one is aware of the derivative nature of one's material and if one has free access to its roots — Hebrew. The founders and great masters of Yiddish literature — Mende Mokher S'farim, Perez and Sholom Aleichem, to mention only a few — were all steeped in Hebrew and its lore. The Jewish-American writer and scholar pay the price of spiritual diminution, if not of outright distortion, for not continuing this tradition. Bilik contributes to this impoverishment by leaning on secondary tools.

Furthermore, the work is dotted with imprecisions and outright misrepresentations. On p. 26, when dealing with Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*, she paraphrases a child's distorted image of a biblical text in the following manner:

... purely by chance David had previously heard an explanation in Yiddish, of the biblical text from Jethro [sic] in which Isaiah, whose

lips are unclean and who lives in an unclean land, is cleansed by an angel who touched his lips with a fiery coal.

The impression that an uninformed reader might derive from this paraphrase is that Isaiah, a dirty old Jew, lived in ancient Israel, a dirty country, and, for his hygiene, resorted to fakir-like tricks. And all that is written, black on white, in the text of Jethro, a non-existent piece of literature.¹ The poetic licence which Henry Roth is taking for his literary needs is one thing, but Bilik, as a critic in search of cultural forms and symbols, is expected to elucidate and explain, not obscure and misinform.

Elsewhere she speaks of "... Yiddish writers who at the end of the nineteenth century drew their fictional worlds from a tradition that they knew was doomed and that no longer afforded intellectual sustenance" (p. 167). Here Bilik confuses religion with culture, a mistake made by many outsiders to the Jewish culture. Yiddish writers might have lost their religious faith, but they hardly lost their ties with the Jewish heritage, which served them as an unfailing inspiration and an ever-renewed treasure from which to create major literary and other artistic achievements.

And, again, on p. 92, she repeats an unwarranted stereotype: "... as pawnbroker he has been Jehovah-like in his sternness untinged with mercy." Has she ever heard of "The Lord, [Jehovah] The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6)?

Moreover, the underlying assumption of her analysis is based on a false premise. She writes:

For, regardless of how alienated the immigrant-survivor is from tradi-

tional Judaism, his experience of the Holocaust has made it possible for him to embody, preserve, and transmit significant fragments of the Jewish past (p. 48).

This statement is neither true nor just. As it happens, the majority of the characters are conceived in a way which hardly qualifies them as vehicles of Jewish values, thought, or religion. Occasionally, they pronounce snatches of reflection which remotely resemble Talmudic casuistry, but this does not make them Talmudic scholars. They may be wise, erudite, humane, or of a philosophical turn of mind, but that does not make them *Zaddikim*, not even secular ones. The survivors may be worthy or unworthy human beings, regenerated through the crucible of their ordeal or broken by it, but this has nothing to do with the Jewish heritage. To reiterate a point already made, the Holocaust was a Jewish national catastrophe. It must not be made into a baptism in Judaism.

Perhaps it is appropriate to conclude this essay with words quoted by Ms. Bilik from the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism: "forgetfulness leads to exile while remembrance is the secret of redemption." Would that both Jewish-American writers and Jewish-American critics stretched their remembrance a little further and reached the roots of their cultural being.

1. "Jethro" is a *parashah*, a section of the Pentateuch in conjunction with which Isaiah, Chapter 6, would be read during Sabbath synagogue service. Roth's reference is to this very chapter from Isaiah, verses 5-7.

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TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

I would like, if I may speak for those of us on the Catholic "side" of the Christian-Jewish dialogue, to join in expressing our appreciative congratulations to you and to JUDAISM on the occasion of your journal's thirtieth anniversary. Michael Wyschogrod's review-essay of the recent works of Fathers Thoma and Mussner was, I feel, an excellent way to celebrate that aspect of JUDAISM which has consistently chronicled the embryonic relationship between the Church and the Jewish people with seminal articles in the field over the years.

Regarding Wyschogrod's review, I would find myself in essential agreement with his perceptions, especially with his conclusion that a "new stage" has been reached in the dialogue, and that Mussner and Thoma represent "the frontier" of Catholic views on the relationship between our two faiths. It would be a disservice, however, if the readers of this journal gained from this the impression that these two scholars are alone or isolated within the Catholic community today in holding such views. Rather, they are representative of a growing number of Catholic theologians, . . . (nor are) the generally positive views represented by Mussner and Thoma in any significant way out of step with the direction and vision of the Catholic hierarchy or of the Holy See on these matters. . . .

John Paul II's statements on Jewish-Christian relations, when read together (cf. J. Sheerin and J. Hotchkin, eds., *John Paul II: Addresses and Homilies on Ecumenism*, [Washington, D.C.: USCC publications, 1981]) record the development of an increasingly explicit and positive approach (cf. especially Mainz, November, 1980). In the light of the these and of local hierarchical statements (such as that of the French bishops in 1973 or the American bishops in 1975) which affirm the ongoing validity of God's covenant with the Jewish people, mandate fundamental revisions of catechesis, and project a hope for a

shared witness of Jews and Christians to the world, Mussner and Thoma are properly assessed as moderates within the Catholic community, and the *lex talionis* phrase an unfortunate, but minor glitch.

This is not say that there are no problems, but the problem is not that the hierarchy is failing to assume its proper leadership role in this area of implementation of Conciliar directives . . . ; the problem is that the "teaching of contempt" had become so deeply embedded by the middle of the present century that distinguishing and separating "the wheat from the chaff" in a responsible manner is a monumental detailed task.

Wyschogrod is quite correct, then, to remind us that all is not rosy in the Church. The 1975 American bishops' statement called the renewal "a task . . . as yet hardly begun." And Wyschogrod is right to view the *lex talionis* statement as an example of the intrasigency of the problem. But he is, I feel, somewhat off target in seeking to juxtapose that single comment with the far more central teachings of the Church concerning such fundamental issues as the continued salvific validity of the Jewish covenant after the time of Jesus. The Talmud shows, after all, that the interpretation of the three biblical citations of "an eye for an eye" was still being discussed long after Jesus' time among the rabbis. (Indeed Jesus' dicta on the subject may have made a contribution to, and can in any event best be understood within, that ongoing Pharisaic-rabbinic discussion, as I argue in a forthcoming article to be published in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*). . .

In support of Wyschogrod's views on Paul, I would refer the reader to my 1973 article in JUDAISM, "Typical Jewish Misunderstandings of Christianity," in which I pointed out that the "Jesus is a good guy, Paul a bad guy" view epitomized by Buber's *Two Types of Faith* is more of a stereotype than a help in understanding Pauline thought (even granting that many Christian

scholars have understood Paul in such a way). And I would strengthen Wyschogrod's case a bit by noting that whereas Paul resists circumcision for the gentile Titus (Gal. 12:3) in the context of warning that accepting circumcision binds one to the whole law (Gal. 5:2ff, which is really a backhanded way of acknowledging the Law's continuing validity and force), Paul takes pains (sorry!) to have Timothy circumcised after his

conversion to Christ. The difference in the two cases is clearly given in the text: Timothy, unlike Titus, is one "whose mother was Jewish" (Acts 16:1ff).

It might be noted for the reader's interest that Leonard Swidler of Temple University is currently completing work on the English translation of Mussner's work for publication in this country.

Washington, D.C. EUGENE J. FISHER

Comment by DR. GORDIS:

I wish to thank Dr. Fisher for his felicitations on the Thirtieth Anniversary of JUDAISM and for the high regard that he has expressed for the journal.

There is one aspect of his letter on which I would wish to comment. I refer to the issue of St. Paul's attitude toward the Law. That Paul accepted the binding authority of the Torah for *born Jews* who became Christians (at least during one period of his missionary activity, or before certain audiences) is clear. It has long been recognized by competent scholars, though it has only rarely been transmitted from the pulpit to Christian believers in the pews. Clearly, however, Paul did not regard circumcision as obligatory for *Gentiles* adopting Christianity. Wyschogrod maintains that Paul upheld the binding character of the Torah *always* and for *everyone*.

This contention is effectively contradicted by such passages as Romans 7:7-8, 22-25; Galatians 2:16-21; and I Corinthians 15:56, to cite only a few passages.

Moreover the entire direction of Paul's missionary travels and the logic of events made it clear that in proportion as Paul succeeded in winning converts for Christianity, the group of Jewish Christians would become an ever smaller segment in the church and Gentile Christians would predominate in the new faith. Certainly Paul's reference to "the curse of the Law" and his casuistic "demonstration" that "the Law increases sin" effectively refute the notion that Paul believed in the authority of the Torah, which for him was replaced by the salvific power of the Christ. Clearly Paul was not a member of the "Jews for Jesus" cult.

Articles

<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
ABRAMS, WILLIAM	The Eternal Triangle	347
ALTER, ROBERT	The Jew Who Didn't Get Away: On the Possibility of An American Jewish Culture	274
ANGEL, MARC D.	Sephardic Shabbat	21
BERGER, ALAN I.	Academia and the Holocaust	166
BLOOM, HAROLD	A Speculation Upon American Jewish Culture	266
BROWN, MICHAEL	Biblical Myth and Contemporary Experience: The Akedah in Modern Jewish Literature	99
COHEN, SEYMOUR	The M'sorati Movement: Reflections and Reactions	403
ELIAD, NISSIM	The Work of the World Union for Progressive Judaism	405
FISHMAN, HERTZEL	An Agenda for Conservative Judaism in Israel	410
FRIEDMAN, MAURICE	Walter Kaufmann's Mismeeting With Martin Buber	229
FRIEDMAN, THEODORE	Projections For Reform and Conservatism in Israel	414
	The Sabbath in Israel: Law and Life	93
GINSBURG, ELLIOT K.	The Sabbath in the Kabbalah	26
GORDIS, DAVID M.	Present Problems and Future Prospects	418
GORDIS, ROBERT	A Brief Response	290
	Religious Pluralism in Israel	401
	The Sabbath — Cornerstone and Capstone of Jewish Life	6
GORDON, CYRUS	The Biblical Sabbath: Its Origin and Observance in the Ancient Near East	12
GORDON, URI	A Sabbath at Grandfather's	17
GOTTSCALK, ALFRED	A Message of Tribute (to Robert Gordis)	287
	A Strategy for non-Orthodox Judaism in Israel	421
HIRSCH, RICHARD G.	A Response to Tabory	425

<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
KARFF, SAMUEL E.	Reform Judaism's Adaptation to America	292
KNOX, ISRAEL	Jewish Secularism and the Sabbath	70
KOL, MOSHE	Prospects for a Traditional Religious Movement in Israel	431
KURZWEIL Z'VI	Universalism in the Philosophy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik	459
KUSHNER, HAROLD S.	The American Jewish Experience: A Conservative Perspective	296
LANGER, MICHAEL	More Than Worship is Needed	434
NACHMAN OF BRATSLAV	The Tale of the Menorah translated by Tsila and Howard Schwartz	225
	The Lost Princess retold by Howard Schwartz	225
NADLER, ALLAN I.	Piety and Politics: The Case of the Satmar Rebbe	135
PORTER, JACK NUSAN	Neo-Nazism, Neo-Fascism and Terrorism: A Global Trend?	331
PELL, PINCHAS	Shabbat—A Key to Spiritual Renewal in Israel	87
PETUCHOWSKI, JAKOB J.	The Case for Count Clermont-Tonnerre	472
PLAUT, W. GUNTHER	Reform's Concern With The Sabbath	55
ROSHWALD, MORDECAI	Tel-Aviv — Then and Now	303
SAPOSNIK, IRVING S.	Bellow, Malamud, Roth . . . and Styron?	322
SCHAALMAN, HERMAN E.	An Agenda for Reform Judaism in Israel	438
SCHERER, REBECCA	Creative Assimilation and its Benefits	478
SEESKIN, KENNETH R.	The Perfection of God and the Presence of Evil	202
SIEGEL, SEYMOUR	The Sabbath and Conservative Judaism	45
SIGAL, PHILLIP	Toward a Renewal of Sabbath Halakhah	75
SIEGMAN, HENRY	The Contribution of Dr. Gordis	288
SPERO, MOSHE HALEVI	Reflections on the Inevitability of Death	333
STAUB, JACOB J.	The Sabbath in Reconstructionism	63
TABORY, EPHRAIM	Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel: Aims and Platforms	390

<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
WAXMAN, CHAIM I.	The Sabbath as Dialectic — The Meaning and Role	37
WAXMAN, MORDECAI	The Challenge to Conservative Judaism in Israel	441
WAXMAN, RUTH B.	The Thirtieth Birthday of JUDAISM	264
WEILER, MOSES CYRUS	Inner Weaknesses in Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel	447
WOLF, ALFRED	Stefan Zweig and Judaism — A Letter and an Interview	241
WOLKE, MARSHALL	The Mandate for Conservative Judaism in Israel	450
WURZBURGER, WALTER S.	Denominationalism and the American Experience — An Orthodox View	299
YOUDOVIN, IRA S.	New Winds Blowing	452
ZEMER, MOSHE	The Roots of non-Orthodoxy in Israel	456

Reviews

<i>Reviewer</i>	<i>Book and Author</i>	
COHEN, JEREMY	Decoding the Rabbis: A Thirteenth Century Commentary on the Aggadah by Marc Saperstein	372
FRANK, BERNHARD	The Jewish Muse Review-Essay on Hebrew Ballads and Poems by Else Lasker-Schüler The Syrian African Rift and Other Poems by Avoth Yeshurun In Light of Genesis by Pamela White Hadas	491
FRIEDLAND, ERIC L.	A Whole New Megillah Review-Essay on Megillat Hanukkah by Arthur A. Chiel	485
JACOBS, LOUIS	Maimonides and Aquinas: A Contemporary Appraisal by Jacob Haberman	254

KABAKOFF, JACOB	Sheva Tarbuyot Yisrael (Seven Jewish Cultures) A Reinterpretation of Jewish History and Thought by Efraim Shmueli	121
KRAUT, BENNY	Faith and the Holocaust Review-Essay on With God in Hell by Eliezer Berkovits and The Faith and Doubt of Holocaust Survivors by Reeve Brenner	185
LOWENSTEIN, STEVEN	From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism 1700-1933 by Jacob Katz	376
MESHER, DAVID R.	Reading the Holocaust Review-Essay on A Double Dying by Alvin H. Rosenfeld The Resonance of Dust by Edward Alexander By Words Alone by Sidra de Koven Ezrahi Versions and Survival by Lawrence L. Langer	177
MORGAN, MICHAEL L.	Counter-History by David Biale Divine Commands and Moral Requirements by Philip L. Quinn	124 367
NOVAK, DAVID	A Jewish Response to a New Christian Theology Review-Essay on Discerning the Way: A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality by Paul van Buren	112
PFEFFER, LEO	Jewish Justice and Reconciliation: History of the Jewish Conciliation Board of America 1930-1968 by Israel Goldstein	499
ROSHWALD, MIRIAM	Immigrant Survivors: Post-Holocaust Consciousness in Recent Jewish American Fiction by Dorothy Seidman Bilik	502

WYSCHOGROD, MICHAEL	A New Stage in Jewish-Christian Dialogue Review-Essay on A Christian Theology of Judaism by Clemens Thoma and <i>Traktat Über die Juden</i> by Franz Mussner	355
YOSKOWITZ, HERBERT A.	An Irrational Society Revisited Review-Essay on Fin-De-Siècle Vienna by Carl Schorske	246
<i>Poems</i>		
CLENMAN, DONIA	Jericho	380
FRANKEL, ELLEN	The Talmud Lesson	332
KAPLAN, SHELLEY	I Had Been A Rachel	240
LEOPOLD, RENEE LURIA	Monologue From the Grave	346
PACERNIK, GARY	Rabbi	458
WILK, MELVIN	Torah	210

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